



CARLOS S. VILLELA / LIAISON

THE
THOUSAND AND ONE DAYS

PERSIAN TALES

EDITED BY
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IN TWO VOLUMES—VOL. I.

WITH A FRONTISPICE BY STANLEY L. WOOD

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ای دختر خوب روی
دوست دله
این کتاب
از دست حافظ
گیه

سید احمد
پور

P R E F A C E

HERE is a collection of excellent tales. They are now old friends of mine, yet I made their acquaintance by mere chance. I fell upon them—or rather I should say upon some of them—a few years ago, when I was first attempting to gain that smattering of Persian which, slight though it be, has given me so much pleasure. It was on a second-hand bookstall—the very bookstall, I believe, that has been made famous by Mr. Andrew Lang in his ‘Book Lover’s Purgatory’—that I, rummaging, discovered some little French volumes, French volumes of the last century, lettered ‘Mille et un Jours.’ The title captivated me at once. I had loved ‘The Thousand and One Nights’ all my life, but I had never heard of ‘The Thousand and One Days.’ I opened one of the volumes, and found that they professed to contain Persian stories. To the beginner in Persian, anything bearing the

Persian name has a charm, and I eagerly collected the companions of the set. They were imperfect, unfortunately, only four out of a proper five, but I bought them, and read their stories, as far as they went. I soon learned that they were easily obtainable in modern French editions, and I got the modern French editions and completed my knowledge of 'The Thousand and One Days.'

It is curious to find that while in France 'The Thousand and One Days' are only second in popularity to 'The Thousand and One Nights,' they are almost if not entirely unknown in England. They have been translated, it is true, into English twice, but both times were early in the last century. The first translation, by Dr. King, was published in 1714; the second, by Ambrose Philips, was published in 1738. So far as I know, these translations have not been reprinted; so far as I know, no other translation of 'The Thousand and One Days' has been made. And yet they well deserve translating. If they are not such splendid stories as 'The Thousand and One Nights,' what stories in the world are so splendid? We may love 'The Thousand and One Nights' with all our hearts, and yet be willing to welcome

'The Thousand and One Days' for the sake of that enchanted and enchanting Orient of which they tell.

According to the preface to the Garnier edition, 'The Thousand and One Days' were first given to the Western world by the French Orientalist, Petis de la Croix, in 1710. His version professes to be a translation of a Persian original called 'Hazar Yek Ruz,' or 'The Thousand and One Days.' Petis de la Croix professed to get them from a Dervish named Mocles, whom he knew when he was in Ispahan in 1675. Mocles had adapted them, it would seem, from certain Indian comedies. Of these Indian comedies it is said that a Turkish version exists in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, under the title of 'Al farady baad al chidda,' or 'Joy after Sorrow.' Mocles allowed Petis de la Croix, who seems to have stood high in his favour, to take a copy of the 'Hazar Yek Ruz,' and from this copy Petis de la Croix made his translation on his return to Paris. That is the statement. Whether it is accurate or not, whether the manuscript of the 'Hazar Yek Ruz' used by Petis de la Croix exists, whether the 'Hazar Yek Ruz' are still familiar

studies in Ispahan and Bagdad, whether they are all truly Eastern tales, I leave it to others to argue over, and, if they can, to decide. One, at least, will be familiar, in many forms, to all students of folk-lore. Another will recall one of the most fanciful of the tales of Hans Christian Andersen. But whatever the origin of these stories, whatever their parallels in the illimitable kingdom of fiction, they deserve for their own sake attention and applause. 'The Thousand and One Days' are here and ready to speak for themselves.

JUSTIN HUNTLY McCARTHY.

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THE THOUSAND AND ONE DAYS

I

Introduction

HE kingdom of Cashmere was formerly governed by a king named Togrul Bey. He had a son and a daughter who were the admiration of their epoch.

The prince, named Farrukhrouz, or Happy Day, was a young hero of a thousand virtues ; and Farrukhnaz, or Happy Pride, his sister, was a miracle of beauty.

This princess was indeed so beautiful, and at the same time so attractive, that she inspired all men who dared look upon her with love, but this love became fatal to them, for the majority lost their reason or fell into a languor which insensibly consumed them.

When she left the palace to go hunting, she wore no veil. The people followed her in crowds, and testified by their acclamations the pleasure they took in seeing her. She usually rode a white Tartar horse with red spots, and moved in the midst of a hundred slaves, magnificently clothed and mounted on black horses. These slaves were also unveiled, but though they were almost all of charming beauty, their mistress alone attracted all the attention. Every one tried to approach her, in spite of the numerous guards which surrounded her. In vain the soldiers tried, sword in hand, to keep the people back, in vain even they struck and slew those who advanced too near, there were always some unhappy persons who, far from fearing such a deplorable fate, seemed to take a pleasure in dying before the eyes of the princess.

The king, touched by the misfortunes caused by the charms of his daughter, resolved to conceal her from the eyes of men. He forbade her to leave the palace, so that the people saw her no more. Nevertheless the reputation of her beauty spread over the East. Several kings became desirous of her on the faith of her renown, and soon it was known in Cashmere that ambassadors from all the

courts of Asia were coming to ask the hand of the princess. But before they arrived she had a dream which made every man odious to her. She dreamt that a stag caught in a trap had been liberated by a doe, and that the doe having fallen into the same trap, the stag, instead of having helped, had abandoned her.

Farrukhnaz on awaking was struck by this dream. She did not look upon it at all as an illusion of an agitated fancy. She thought that the great ruler of Heaven had interested himself in her destiny, and by these images had wished to make her understand that all men were traitors who could only repay with ingratitude the affection of women.

Possessed by this strange idea, and fearing to be sacrificed to some one of the princes whose ambassadors were daily expected, she went to find the king her father. Without telling him she was opposed to men, she conjured him with tears in her eyes not to marry her in spite of herself. Her tears distressed Togrul Bey.

'No, my daughter,' he said to her, 'I will not force your inclinations. Although it is usual to dispose of women like yourself without consulting

them, I swear that no prince, were he even the heir to the Sultan of India, shall ever marry you without your consent.'

The princess, reassured by this oath, the value of which she knew, retired well satisfied and well resolved to refuse every prince who sought her hand.

A few days after, the ambassadors of several different courts arrived. They had audience in turn. Each one extolled the alliance of his master and the merits of the prince whom he came to propose. The king was very agreeable to them all, but he declared his daughter was the mistress of her hand, because he had solemnly sworn that he would not give her away against her inclination. Thus, the princess not wishing to give herself to anyone, the ambassadors returned very confused at not having succeeded in their embassy.

The wise Togrul Bey saw their departure with sorrow. He feared lest their masters, irritated at his refusals, might think of revenging themselves, and angry at having taken an oath which might bring upon himself a cruel war, he sent for the nurse of Farrukhnaz.

'Sutlumemé,' he said, 'I must confess to you that the conduct of the princess astonishes me.'

What can cause the repugnance she has for marriage? Speak. Is it not you who have inspired it in her ?'

'No, my lord,' replied the nurse, 'I am not at all an enemy of men, and this repugnance is the effect of a dream.'

'Of a dream !' replied the king, very surprised. 'Ah ! what are you saying ? No, no,' he added a moment after, 'I cannot believe what you tell me. What dream could have made such a strong impression on my daughter ?'

Sutlumemé related it, and after telling him all the circumstances, 'Such, my lord,' she continued, 'such is the dream which has struck the imagination of the princess. She judges of men by that stag, and persuaded that they are all ungrateful and perfidious, she rejects all who are presented to her.'

This speech increased the astonishment of the king, who could not conceive that this dream would have placed the princess in the disposition she was in.

'Well, my dear Sutlumemé,' he said to the nurse, 'what shall we do to destroy the mistrust with which the mind of my daughter is filled against men ?'

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'My lord,' she replied, 'if your majesty will charge me with that care, I do not despair of acquitting myself therein happily.'

'What will you do?' said Togrul Bey.

'I know,' replied the nurse, 'an infinity of curious stories, the relating of which may, in amusing the princess, remove the bad opinion she has of men. In showing her that there have been faithful lovers, I shall doubtless dispose her to believe that they still exist. So, my lord,' she added, 'let me combat her error; I flatter myself I could dissipate it.'

The king approved of the nurse's plan, and she thought only of finding a favourable moment to execute it.

As Farrukhnaz usually spent the time after dinner with the king, the prince of Cashmere, and all the princesses of the court, listening to the palace slaves singing and playing on all sorts of instruments, the mornings appeared more suitable to Sutlumemé, who resolved to take the time which the princess employed in her bath.

So the next day, as soon as Farrukhnaz was in her bath, the nurse said to her, 'I know a story full of singular events. If my princess will permit

me to relate it for her amusement, I do not doubt she will take great pleasure in it.'

The princess of Cashmere, less perhaps to satisfy her curiosity than to content that of her women who pressed her to hear this story, permitted Sutlumemé to begin the recital of it ; which she did in these terms.

(Be it known now that hereafter the Persian sage interpolates, in the manner of the Arabian scribe, the intervals between the bathing times of the princess between the tale-tellings of the nurse. These intervals have been omitted in this English rendering that the stories may move uninterrupted from beginning to end.)

II

The Story of Aboulcasem of Bassora

LL historians agree that the Caliph Haroun-al-Raschid would have been the most perfect, as he was the most powerful, prince of his century if he had not been a little too much inclined to anger, and insupportably vain. He was continually saying that there was no prince in the world so generous as he.

Giafar, his grand vizir, grieved that he should thus praise himself, took the liberty of saying to him one day, 'Oh, my sovereign master, monarch of the earth, pardon your slave if he dares represent to you that you ought not to praise yourself. Leave your praises to be sung by your subjects and the crowd of strangers that are seen at your court. Content yourself with the knowledge that

the former thank Heaven that they were born in your dominions, and that the latter congratulate themselves upon having left their native country to come and live here under your jurisdiction.'

Haroun was hurt at these words. He gazed proudly upon his vizir, and asked him whether he knew anyone to be compared to him in generosity.

'Yes, my lord,' replied Giafar ; 'there lives in the town of Bassora a young man called Aboulcasem. Although a private person, he lives with more than royal magnificence ; and, not excepting your majesty, no prince in the world is more generous than he.'

The caliph flushed at this speech, his eyes sparkled with rage. 'Do you know,' he said, 'that a subject who has the audacity to lie to his master deserves death ?'

'I advance nothing but what is true,' replied the vizir. 'On the last journey I made to Bassora, I saw this Aboulcasem. I went to his house. My eyes, although accustomed to your treasures, were surprised at his riches, and I was charmed with his generous ways.'

At these words the impetuous Haroun could

not restrain his anger. 'You are very insolent,' he cried, 'to compare a private individual with me. Your impudence shall not remain unpunished.' Saying this, he made a sign to the captain of his guards to approach, and commanded him to arrest the vizir Giasar. Then he entered the apartment of the Princess Zobeide ~~his~~ wife, who turned pale with fright at seeing his irritated expression.

'What, my lord,' she said to him, 'can have caused the trouble which agitates you?'

He informed her of what had passed and he complained of his vizir in terms which made Zobeide realise how enraged he was against the minister.

But this wise princess represented to him that he ought to suspend his resentment and send someone to Bassora to verify the matter; that if it turned out to be false the vizir should be punished, but that if on the contrary it were true, which she could not suppose, it was not just to treat him as a criminal.

This speech calmed the fury of the caliph.

'I approve of this advice, madam,' he said to Zobeide, 'and I must admit that I owe this justice

to a minister such as Giasfar. I will do more; as the person entrusted with this errand might, from aversion to my vizir, bring me an unfaithful report, I shall go to Bassora and myself discover the truth. I shall make the acquaintance of this young man whose generosity is praised to me. If I have been told the truth I shall load Giasfar with favours and bear him no grudge because of his frankness, but I swear it will cost him his life if he has told me a falsehood.'

As soon as Haroun had taken this resolution he thought only of carrying it out. He left his palace secretly one night, mounted his horse, and set out on his way without allowing anyone to accompany him, in spite of all Zobeide could say to prevent his departing alone.

Having arrived at Bassora he alighted at the first caravanserai that he found on entering the town, the landlord of which was a worthy old man.

'My father,' said Haroun to him, 'is it true that there is in this town a young man called Aboulcasem who surpasses kings in magnificence and generosity?'

'Yes, my lord,' replied the landlord, 'had I a hundred mouths and in each a hundred tongues I

The pages poured out their different liquors to present to the caliph. He tasted them, and although accustomed to the most delicious beverages in all the East, he declared that he had never drunk better. The dinner hour having arrived, Aboulcasem conducted his guest into another saloon where they found a table covered with the most delicate dishes and served in massive gold plates. The repast over, the young man took the caliph by the hand and led him into a third saloon more richly furnished than the other two, where they brought a prodigious quantity of gold vases, enriched with precious stones and full of all sorts of wines, with dishes of porcelain filled with dried preserves. Whilst the host and his guest drank the most excellent wines, there entered singers and musicians, who commenced a concert which charmed Haroun. 'I have,' he said to himself, 'admirable voices in my palace, but I must admit that they are not to be compared with these. I cannot understand how a private individual can have wealth enough to live so magnificently.'

Whilst the prince was listening with particular attention to a voice the sweetness of which enchanted him, Aboulcasem left the saloon and

returned a minute later, holding in one hand a rod and in the other a little tree, the stem of which was of silver, the branches and the leaves of emeralds, and the fruit of rubies. On the top of the tree appeared a peacock of finely wrought gold, the body of which was full of amber, spirit of aloes, and other perfumes. He placed this tree at the emperor's feet, then tapping the peacock's head with the rod, the peacock spread its wings and tail, and began to revolve with great speed, and as it turned the perfumes with which it was filled came out on all sides and scented the whole saloon.

The caliph could not tire of gazing at the tree and the peacock, and he was still testifying to his admiration when Aboulcasem took them and carried them off very abruptly.

Haroun was surprised at this action and said to himself, 'What does this mean? This young man seems to me not to do things as well as I thought. He takes this tree and the peacock away from me when he sees me absorbed in contemplation of them. Is he afraid I shall ask him to make me a present of them? I fear that Giafar has inappropriately applied to him the title of a generous man.'

This thought was present in his mind when

Aboulcasem returned, accompanied by a little page as beautiful as the sun. This engaging child wore a robe of gold brocade, adorned with pearls and diamonds. He held in his hand a cup made of a single ruby and filled with a purple-coloured wine. He approached the caliph, prostrated himself to the ground before him, and presented the cup to him. The prince put out his hand to take it, and having done so, he put it to his lips ; but, to his amazement, after having drunk, he perceived, on returning it to the page, that it was still quite full. He immediately took it back again, and having put it to his lips, he drained it to the last drop. He then gave it back to the page, and instantly he saw that it filled again without anyone pouring into it.

At this marvellous sight the surprise of Haroun was extreme, and made him forget the tree and the peacock. He asked how that could be done.

‘ My lord,’ replied Aboulcasem, ‘ it is the work of an ancient sage who possessed all the secrets of nature.’

Saying these words he took the page by the hand and went out precipitately.

The caliph was indignant. ‘ Oh ! ’ he said, ‘ this

young man is certainly out of his mind. He brings me his curiosities without my asking him ; he presents them to my gaze, and when he sees that I take the greatest pleasure in looking at them, he takes them from me. Nothing could be more ridiculous or ill-mannered. Ah, Giafar ! I will teach you to judge men better !'

He did not know what to think of the character of his host, or rather he began not to have a good opinion of him, when he saw him return for the third time, followed by a maiden covred with pearls, precious stones, and still more adorned by her beauty than by her ornaments.

The caliph, at the sight of so beautiful an object, remained seized with astonishment. She made him a profound reverence and charmed him still more as she approached. He made her sit down. At the same time Aboulcasem asked for a lute ready tuned.

They brought him one made of aloes wood, ivory, sandal-wood, and ebony. He gave this instrument to the beautiful slave, who played it so perfectly that Haroun, who was a musician, cried in the excess of his admiration, 'O young woman, how enviable is your fate. The greatest

kings of the earth, the commander of the faithful himself, is not as happy as you.'

As soon as Aboulcasem remarked that his guest was enchanted with the girl, he took her by the hand and led her out of the saloon. This was a fresh mortification for the caliph. He nearly burst out, but he controlled himself, and as his host returned immediately, they continued to enjoy themselves till sunset. Then Haroun said to the young man, 'O generous Aboulcasem, I am overwhelmed at the way you have entertained me. Permit me to retire and to leave you in peace.' The young man of Bassora, not wishing to importune him, made him a graceful reverence, and, without opposing his wishes, conducted him as far as the door of his house, asking his pardon for not having received him as magnificently as he deserved.

'I admit,' said the caliph on returning to his caravanserai, 'that as regards magnificence, Aboulcasem excels kings, but as regards generosity, my vizir has no ground for placing him on a parallel with me. Has he made me the least present? Yet I exclaimed at the beauty of the tree, the cup, the page, and the maiden. And my admiration ought at least to have compelled him

to offer me some one of these things. No, that man is only ostentatious. He takes pleasure in displaying his riches before the eyes of strangers. Why? Merely to satisfy his pride and vanity. In reality, he is nothing but a miser, and I certainly ought not to forgive Giasfar for having lied to me.'

With these reflections, so disagreeable for his first minister, he arrived at the caravanserai. But what was his astonishment to find there silken carpets, magnificent tents, pavilions, a large number of domestics, slaves as well as freemen, horses, mules, camels, and besides all this, the tree and the peacock, the page with his cup, and the beautiful slave with her lute. The domestics prostrated themselves before him, and the girl presented to him a roll of silk paper, which he unrolled and which contained these words: 'Dear and amiable guest, whom I do not know,—I have not, perhaps, shown you the respect due to you. I implore you to forget the shortcomings of your reception, and not to affront me by refusing the little presents that I send you. As for the tree, the peacock, the page, the cup, and the slave, they were already yours, since they pleased you: for anything that pleases

my guests ceases to belong to me and becomes their own property.'

When the caliph had finished reading this letter, he was surprised at the liberality of Aboulcasem, and admitted that he had misjudged the young man. 'A thousand million benedictions on Giasfar,' he cried. 'He is the cause of my being disabused. Boast no longer, Haroun, of being the most magnificent and the most generous of men ! One of your subjects excels you in that respect. But, he added, how can a private person make me such presents ? I ought to ask him where he has found so much wealth. I was wrong in not interrogating him on that point. I do not wish to return to Bagdad without having investigated this matter. It concerns me to know how in the states which are under my control, there comes to be a man who leads a more delightful life than I. I must see him again, and discover adroitly by what means he has been able to make such a prodigious fortune.'

Impatient to satisfy his curiosity, he left his new domestics in the caravanserai and returned to the young man immediately, and when alone with him, 'O too amiable Aboulcasem,' he said, 'the

presents which you have made me are so considerable that I feel I cannot accept them without abusing your generosity. Permit me to return them to you, and charmed by the reception you have given me, let me go and publish in Bagdad your magnificence and your generous inclinations.'

'My lord,' replied the young man with a mortified air, 'you have doubtless occasion to complain of the unhappy Aboulcasem. Some action of his must have displeased you since you reject his presents. You would not do me this injury if you were pleased with me.'

'No,' replied the prince, 'Heaven bears me witness that I am enchanted with your politeness, but your presents are too precious. They surpass those of kings, and if I dare tell you what I think, you should be less prodigal of your wealth, and reflect that it may become exhausted.'

Aboulcasem smiled at these words and said to the caliph, 'My lord, I am very glad to learn that it is not to punish me for having committed a fault that you wish to refuse my presents. To induce you to receive them, I will tell you that I can make similar ones every day, yea, even greater ones without inconvenience. I see,' he added, 'that

this speech astonishes you, but you will cease to be surprised at it when I have related to you all the adventures which have happened to me. I must needs confide in you.'

Thus speaking, he conducted Haroun into a room a thousand times richer and more ornate than the others. Several very fragrant perfume-burners scented it, and in it was a golden throne with rich foot carpets. Al-Raschid could not persuade himself that he was in a private person's house ; he thought he must be with a prince more powerful than himself. The young man made him mount the throne, seated himself at his side, and commenced the history of his life in this manner :

' I am the son of a jeweller of Cairo, named Abdclaziz. He possessed such wealth that, fearing to rouse against himself the envy or the avarice of the Sultan of Egypt, he left his country and came to establish himself at Bassora, where he espoused the only daughter of the richest merchant of the town.

' I was the sole issue of this marriage, so that, inheriting all the wealth of my father and mother after their death, I had a very brilliant fortune. But I was very young. I liked spending, and seeing that I had the means for indulging my

liberal tendencies, or, rather, my prodigality, I lived with such extravagance that in less than two or three years my patrimony was dissipated.

'Then, like all those who repent of their ill-conduct, I made the finest reflections in the world. After the figure I had cut at Bassora I thought it best to go and live miserably elsewhere. It seemed to me that my poverty would be less insupportable before the eyes of strangers. I sold my house, the only thing that remained to me. I joined a caravan of merchants, with whom I went to Moussul, then to Damascus ; and, crossing the desert of Arabia and Mount Pharan, I arrived at Cairo.

'The beauty of the houses and the magnificence of the mosques surprised me ; and, remembering suddenly that I was in the town where Abdelaziz was born, I could not help sighing and shedding tears. "Oh, my father !" I said to myself, "if you were still alive and saw in the place where you enjoyed so enviable an existence, your son in such deplorable case, how great would be your grief !" Occupied with this thought which saddened me, I walked by the banks of the Nile. I was behind the sultan's palace. A young lady, whose beauty struck me, appeared at a window. I

stopped to look at her ; she perceived it and retired. As night was approaching, and as I had not yet secured a lodging, I went to look for one in the neighbourhood.

‘ I slept little ; the young lady’s features were continually before my mind’s eye. I felt that I loved her already. “Would to God,” I said, “that I had not seen her or that she had not noticed me. I should not have conceived for her this mad love or I should have had the pleasure of looking at her longer.” I did not fail to return on the morrow beneath her windows in the hope of seeing her. But I was disappointed. She did not appear. That troubled me greatly, without discouraging me, however ; for I returned the following day and was more fortunate. The lady appeared, and seeing that I was looking at her with attention she said,

“ Insolent fellow, do you not know that it is forbidden to men to stop under the windows of this palace ? Retire instantly. If the sultan’s officers were to surprise you in this place, they would put you to death.”

‘ Instead of being alarmed at these words and taking flight, I bowed my face to the ground, then,

having risen : "Madam," I said, "I am a stranger. I am ignorant of the customs of Cairo, and did I know them your beauty would prevent my observing them."

"Ah ! bold fellow," she cried, "tremble lest I summon slaves to punish your audacity."

'Thus saying she disappeared, and I thought that, indignant at my boldness, she was really going to call her people to ill-treat me. I expected to see armed men pounce down upon me, but more affected by the anger of the lady than by her threats, I was insensible to the peril in which I found myself. What a cruel night it was for me ! An ardent fever, caused by the agitation of my love, excited my blood and caused me to dream frightfully.

'However, the desire to see the lady again and the hope of being more favourably looked upon by her, although I had no occasion to expect it, calmed my transports.

'Carried away by my mad passion, I walked again the next day along the banks of the Nile, and placed myself on the same spot as on the preceding days.

'The young lady appeared as soon as she saw me, but she looked so proud that I was afraid.

“What, miserable wretch!” said she, “after the threats I uttered, you return to this place! Fly from this palace! I will warn you once more out of pity that your destruction is certain if you do not disappear at once.”

“What can keep you?” she added, a moment later, seeing that I did not go away. “Tremble, bold youth, the thunderbolt is ready to fall on you!”

At this speech, which would doubtless have persuaded a man less enamoured than myself, instead of leaving the lady, I looked at her and replied :

“Lovely lady, do you suppose that an unhappy man who has allowed himself to be charmed and who adores you hopelessly, can fear death? Alas! I prefer death to life without you.”

“Well,” she replied, “since you are so obstinate, go and pass the rest of the day in the town and return to-night beneath my windows.”

At these words she disappeared precipitately and left me filled with astonishment, love, and joy.

If till then I had been rebellious to the rigorous commands of the lady, you can well imagine that I now submitted very willingly, as the new con-

dition added to it softened its rigour. In the expectation of the pleasures which I promised myself, I forgot my misfortunes.

“I should no longer,” I said, “complain of fortune; she becomes as favourable to me as she was unfavourable.” I retired home, where I occupied myself in adorning and perfuming myself.

‘When night had come and I thought it time to go whither my love called me, I betook myself there in the darkness. I found a rope suspended from the window of the lady’s apartment.

‘I made use of it to ascend. I traversed two rooms to gain a third, which was magnificently furnished, in the middle of which was a silver throne.

‘I paid little attention to the precious furniture and all the rare things which it contained. The lady alone attracted my attention. How fair she was! Whether Nature had formed her to show men that she knew, when it pleased her, how to make a perfect work, or whether, but too enamoured of her, my charmed imagination concealed her defects from my eyes, I was enchanted with her beauty.

‘She made me ascend the throne, sat herself

beside me, and asked who I was. I related my history to her with all sincerity. I perceived that she listened very attentively. She even appeared to me touched by the situation to which fortune had reduced me, and this pity, which indicated a generous heart, succeeded in making me the most enamoured of men. "Madam," I said, "however unhappy I may be, I cease to be an object of pity, since you are sensible of my misfortunes."

'Insensibly we engaged in a tender conversation which she sustained with much brilliancy, and she admitted to me, that if I had been struck at sight of her, she, on her side, had not been able to help being interested in me.

"Since you have informed me who you are," she continued, "I would like you to know who I am.

"My name is Dardané. I was born in the town of Damascus. My father was one of the vizirs of the prince who reigns there to-day, and was called Behrouz. As the glory of his master and the welfare of the state regulated all his actions, he numbered among his enemies all those who had other principles, and these enemies poisoned the king's mind against him. The unfortunate Behrouz, after several years' service, was removed

from the court. He retired to a house which he possessed at the gates of the town, where he devoted himself entirely to my education. But, alas ! he had not the pleasure of enjoying the fruit of his labours, he died whilst I was still a child. My mother no sooner saw him dead than she sold all his effects, and this wretched woman, after having sold me to a slave merchant, departed for the Indies with a young man whom she loved.

“The slave merchant took me to Cairo with several other girls whom he had bought. He dressed us very magnificently, and when he thought us fit to be presented to the Sultan of Egypt, he made us enter a great room where the sultan was seated on his throne. One after the other we passed before this prince, who seemed charmed at the sight of me. He descended from his throne, and having approached me, ‘How well made she is !’ he cried. ‘What eyes ! what a mouth ! My friend,’ he continued, addressing the merchant, ‘since you have sold me slaves you have never brought me one so beautiful as this one. No, nothing is to be compared to this young person. Ask what you wish for her. I cannot sufficiently pay you for so charming an object.’ Finally, the

prince, transported with joy and already very amorous, gave a large sum to the merchant, and dismissed him with his other slaves. He then called the chief of the eunuchs: 'Keyd Kabir,' said he, 'conduct this sun into a separate apartment.' Keyd Kabir obeyed, and brought me into this one, which is the richest in the palace. I was no sooner there than several slaves, young and old, entered. Some brought me magnificent clothes, others refreshments, and others had lutes, on which they played well. They all told me that they were sent by the sultan: that the prince destined them for my service, and that they would spare nothing to acquit themselves well.

"I soon received a visit from the sultan. He declared his love for me in the most ardent terms, and the simple replies I made to speeches so new to me, instead of displeasing the prince, inflamed his passion.

"And now you behold me favourite sultana. All the slaves who thought themselves beautiful enough to merit my place were very jealous of me, and you cannot imagine all the means employed by them for three years past to destroy me.

"But I keep guard so well that their malice has

been futile till now. It is not that I am content with my fate, for I cannot love the sultan, and I am not ambitious enough to be dazzled by the honours done to me.

“I am only piqued by all the efforts that my rivals make to destroy me, and I wish to baffle them. You must pardon that in a woman.

“Their chagrin,” she continued, “gives me more pleasure than the sultan’s love. I must admit, however, that the prince is amiable, but whether it does not depend upon us to love, or whether the conquest of my heart was reserved for you, you are the first man who has attracted my attention.”

‘In response to such an amiable avowal, which seemed to me to increase the value of my good fortune, I promised the young lady an immortal love, and I besought her to grant me her love. My passionate address melted her, but fortune delights in presenting to the unfortunate deceptive hopes, and my unlucky star had not yet shed on me all its evil influence. At the moment when the beautiful Dardané, listening to my pressing and tender demands, was about to answer me, a loud knocking was heard at the door of the room. We were both alarmed.

"O heaven!" said the lady, quite low, to me, "I have been betrayed! We are lost! It is the sultan himself!"

'Had the rope of which I had made use for ascending been attached to the window of the room where we were, I could easily have saved myself, but it was at a window of the very room through which the sultan had passed. So, having recourse to the only move left to me, I hid under the throne, and Dardané went to open the door.

'The sultan, followed by several black eunuchs who carried torches, entered with a furious air. "Unhappy woman," he cried, "what man is here with you? One has been seen to climb to a window, and the rope is still attached to it." The lady remained speechless at these words. She could not answer a single syllable, and though she strove to put on a bold front, her terror but too surely condemned her. "Search everywhere," added the sultan, "and don't let the villain escape my vengeance!"

'The eunuchs obeyed. They soon discovered me. They tore me out from under the throne and dragged me to the feet of their master, who said, "O miserable creature! what boldness is

thine! Has the town of Cairo not women enough for you that you do not respect my palace?"

'I was not less frightened than the favourite. I almost fell into a swoon. I think if the same adventure were to happen to you at Bagdad and you were to find yourself surpriscd by the great Haroun-al-Raschid in his seraglio (forgive me this reflection, my lord), you would not perhaps be otherwise affected. I had not the strength to speak. I was on my knees before the sultan, and I only expected death. The prince drew his sabre, but just as he was about to strike, an old mulatto woman arrived who prevented him.

"What are you going to do, my lord?" she said to him. "Do not strike these miserable wretches; do not soil your hand with such abject blood. They are unworthy even that the earth should receive their bodies, since they have had the insolence, the one to be wanting in respect to you, and the other to betray you. Order them both to be thrown into the Nile, and let them serve as food for the fishes."

'The sultan followed this advice, and the eunuchs threw us into the Nile from the windows

of a tower, the walls of which were washed by the river.

‘Although dazed by my fall, as I can swim very well, I gained the bank opposite the palace. Escaped from such a great danger, I remembered the young lady whom the fear of death had made me forget, and love in its turn triumphing over the fear of death, I re-entered the Nile with more ardour than that with which I had left it, and swam down its stream ; and, as far as the darkness of the night would allow me to discern objects, I endeavoured to discover on the water the body of the unfortunate lady whose destruction I had caused. But I could see it nowhere, and feeling that my strength was beginning to give out, I was obliged to regain the bank in order to preserve a life which I was risking uselessly. I could not doubt but that the favourite had lost hers, and I was inconsolable at having her death to reproach myself with. I wept bitterly. “Alas!” I said, “but for me, but for my fatal love, Dardané, the beautiful Dardané, would be still alive! O, why did I come to Cairo? why, knowing that misfortune is contagious, did I seek the affection of so charming a person ?” Overcome with grief at being the cause

of her misfortune, and sojourn at Cairo being odious to me after this adventure, I took the road to Bagdad.

'After several days' journey, I arrived one evening at the foot of a mountain, behind which was a rather large town. I seated myself to rest on the banks of a stream, and I resolved to pass the night in this place. Sleep overcame me, and already the first rays of daylight were about to appear, when I heard at a few paces from me cries and groans which awoke me.

'I listened attentively, and it seemed to me that these cries came from a woman who was being ill-treated. I rose immediately, and, advancing in the direction of the cries, I saw a man digging a ditch with a spade. I hid myself in a bush to watch him. I observed that having made the ditch, he put in it something which he covered with earth, and that he then went away. Day having dawned almost at that moment, I approached to see what it was. I removed the earth, and found a large sack all blood-stained, in which there was a young girl who seemed about to breathe her last sigh. Her clothes, although covered with blood, did not prevent my

order of the lady, clothes for her and for me, with some slaves to wait on us.

'I passed in the quarter for the brother of the lady, and I lived with her as if it had been so in reality, although she was a very beautiful person. Dardané occupied my thoughts unceasingly, and far from giving myself up to new loves, I wished more than once to leave the lady, but she begged me not to abandon her. "Wait, young man," she said to me, "I still have need of you for some time. I will soon tell you who I am, and I mean to reward well the services you have rendered me."

'So I lived on with her, and I did out of pure generosity all that she asked of me. However desirous I was of knowing why she had been wounded, it was not possible to get her to tell me. It was in vain that I often gave her occasion to relate her story to me; she kept a profound silence on the subject instead of satisfying my curiosity.

"'Go,' she said to me one day, presenting me with a purse full of sequins, "go and find a merchant called Namahran. Tell him that you wish to buy some beautiful stuffs. He will show you several

kinds. Choose some pieces and pay for them without bargaining. Be very affable to him, and bring me the stuffs."

'I inquired for Namahran's dwelling; it was pointed out to me. He was seated in his shop. I saw a man of very fine figure whose hair was in small waves and black as jet. He had beautiful earrings and large diamonds on all his fingers. I seated myself beside him. I asked for stuffs; he had several pieces shown to me. I chose three of them; he put the price on them. I counted out the money to him. I rose and after having taken leave of him very civilly, I had the stuffs carried away by a slave who followed me.

'Two days after, the lady gave me another purse and told me to return to Namahran to buy other stuffs. "But remember," she added, "that you must not bargain. Whatever he asks you, do not fail to give it to him."

'As soon as the merchant saw me coming and knew what brought me, he spread before me his richest stuffs. I stopped at those which pleased me, and when it came to paying I threw my purse to Namahran, telling him to take what

he wished. He was charmed with this noble proceeding.

“My lord,” he said, “would you not one day do me the honour of coming to dine with me?”

“Very willingly,” I replied, “and that to-morrow if you wish it.”

The merchant signified that it would give him much pleasure.

‘When I told the lady that Namahran had invited me to dine with him, she seemed transported with joy.

“Do not fail to go,” she said, “and to beg him to come here to-morrow. Tell him that you wish to regale him in your turn. I will take care to have a superb feast prepared.”

I did not know what to think of the joy she expressed. I saw that she had some plan, but I was very far from realising it.

I went on the following day to the merchant, who received and treated me perfectly well. Before separating I told him of my place of abode, and that I wanted also to entertain him at dinner on the following day.

He did not fail to come. We both seated ourselves at table and passed all the day in drinking

the best of wines. The lady would not be of the party ; she even took great care to remain in retirement during the meal. As she had strongly urged me to amuse the merchant and not to allow him to return home that night, I detained him in the evening in spite of all his entreaties to be allowed to go. We continued drinking and carried on the debauch till midnight.

‘ Then I led him into a room where there was a bed prepared for him. I left him there and retired to my own room.

‘ I went to bed and fell asleep, but I did not long enjoy the sweets of slumber. The lady soon came to wake me. She held a torch in one hand and a dagger in the other. “ Young man,” she said, “ get up : come and see your guest bathed in his perfidious blood.”

‘ I rose full of horror at these words. I dressed in haste. I followed the lady into the merchant’s room, and saw the unhappy man stretched lifeless on his bed. “ Ah ! cruel woman,” I cried, “ what have you done ? How can you have committed such a black deed ? And why have you made me an instrument of your rage ? ”

“ Young stranger,” she said, “ do not be angry

at having helped me to revenge myself on Namah-ran. He was a traitor. You will not pity him when you know his crime ; or, rather, when you learn that he is the author of my misfortune that I am going to relate to you."

The Story of the Lady Found in a Sack

 AM," she continued, "the daughter of the king of this city. One day that I was going to the public baths, I perceived Namahran in his shop. I was struck by him, and in spite of myself, his image was always before me.

"I felt that I loved him. I fought at first against my feelings. I represented to myself their indignity, and I thought to conquer them by reflections. But I was deceived ; love got the better of my pride. I became restless and languishing, and the evil increasing every moment, I fell into an illness of which I should infallibly have died, if my companion, who better understood my symptoms than the physicians, had not guessed the cause. With much adroitness she got me to admit that her

conjectures were correct. I related to her in what manner my unhappy love had originated, and she judged, from what I said to her, that I was madly enamoured of Namahran.

“She was touched by the condition in which I was, and she promised to relieve my distress. One night, in fact, she introduced the young merchant into the seraglio in the clothes of a girl, and brought him into my apartment. In addition to the joy of seeing him, I had the pleasure of remarking that he was charmed at his good fortune.

“After having kept him enclosed in a cabinet for several days, my companion got him out of the seraglio as happily as she had introduced him and, from time to time he returned under the same disguise.

“The fancy took me to go in my turn to see Namahran. I took pleasure in surprising him, not doubting that this step, which proved to him the excess of my passion, would be very agreeable to him.

“I left the palace quite alone one night, by détours which were known to me, and betook myself to his house.

“I had little trouble in finding it because I had

remarked it well in going to and returning from the baths. I knocked at the door. A slave came to open it and asked me who I was and what I wanted.

“I am, I replied to him, a young lady of the city, and I wish to speak to your master.”

“He is with company,” replied the slave. “He is entertaining another lady at this moment; come back again to-morrow.”

“At the mention of the word lady I felt beside myself with jealousy: I became furious. Instead of retiring I entered the house precipitately and, proceeding into a hall in which there was light and all the paraphernalia of a feast, I perceived the merchant at table with a rather beautiful young girl. They were both drinking and singing tender and passionate songs. I could not restrain my anger at this spectacle. I threw myself upon the young girl and struck her a thousand blows. I should have taken her life had she not succeeded in escaping me. I did not confine myself only to my rival in my rage, I did not spare Namahran.

‘He first threw himself at my knees, asked pardon of me, and swore he would not betray me. He appeased me: I yielded to his vows and his contrition. He even persuaded me to drink with

him, and so effectually that I became intoxicated. When he saw me in this state, the traitor struck me several blows with a knife. I fell insensible ; he believed me dead. He put me in a great sack and carried me himself on his back out of the town, to the place where you found me. Whilst he was digging a grave I recovered my senses and uttered several cries ; but far from being touched and showing himself merciful enough by despatching me before putting me in the earth, the barbarian took a delight in burying me alive.

“As for Mahyar,” she continued, “the other merchant to whom you carried letters from me, he is a seraglio-merchant. I let him know that I wanted money and told him my adventure, begging him to keep it secret until I had tasted the pleasure of a complete revenge. This, O young man, is my history. I did not wish to tell it you before for fear that you might scruple to bring my victim to me here. I do not think that you now disapprove my noble action ; and to show that you are an enemy to treacherous hearts, you ought to praise me for having had the courage to pierce that of Namahran. As soon as it is daylight,” she added, “we will go together to the palace. The king my

father loves me passionately. I shall confess my fault to him. I hope that he will forgive me, and I venture to promise that he will overwhelm you with favours."

"No, madam," I said to the princess, "I ask nothing for having saved you. Heaven bears me witness that I do not regret it; but I admit to you that I am in despair at having served your resentment so well. You have abused my complaisance in making me contribute to a treachery. You ought rather to have called upon me to revenge you nobly. I would willingly have exposed my life for you."

'For, my lord, although I considered Namahran justly punished, I so much regretted having myself led him to death that I abandoned the lady on the spot and despised her promises. I left the town before daybreak, and perceiving a caravan of merchants who were encamped in a meadow, I joined them, and as they were going to Bagdad, where I wished to go, I journeyed with them. I arrived there happily; but I soon found myself in a sad situation. I was without money, and only a gold sequin remained to me of all my past fortune.

I bought with it scented apples, sweets, balms, and roses. I went every day to the shop of a merchant who vended cooling drinks, where several lords and other persons were accustomed to assemble to converse. I presented to them in a basket what I had bought. Each one took what he wished, and did not fail to give me some money, so that this little trading furnished me with means to live comfortably.

‘One day that I was offering flowers as usual at the merchant’s, in the corner of the room there was an old man to whom I paid no attention, and who, seeing that I did not address myself to him at all, called me, and said, “My friend, how comes it that you do not offer me your merchandise as well as the others? Don’t you count me amongst worthy people, or do you think that I have nothing in my purse?”

“My lord,” I replied, “I beg you to excuse me. I did not see you, I assure you. All I have is at your service, and I ask you nothing for it.”

‘At the same time I offered him my basket. He took a scented apple, and bade me seat myself beside him, which I did. He asked me a thousand questions, who I was and what I was called.

“Excuse me,” I said sighing, “from satisfying your curiosity. I cannot satisfy it without opening wounds which time is beginning to heal.”

These words, or rather the tone in which they were said, prevented the old man from pressing me further. He changed the conversation : and when, after a long talk, he rose to go, he took from his purse ten gold sequins which he placed into my hands.

I was very surprised at his liberality. The most prominent persons to whom I was in the habit of offering my basket did not give me even a sequin, and I did not know what to think of this man. I returned the next day to the merchant’s shop, and found the old man there again. He was not that day the last to attract my attention. I addressed myself first to him : he took a little balm, and having made me again seat myself beside him, he pressed me so warmly to relate my story to him, that I could not help doing so.

I related to him everything that had happened to me, and after I had confided in him, he said :

“I knew your father. I am a merchant of Bassora. I have no children nor hope of having any. I have conceived a friendship for you. I adopt you. Thus, my son, console yourself for

past misfortunes. You find a father richer than Abdelaziz, and who will not be less friendly to you."

' I thanked this venerable old man for the honour which he did me, and followed him when he left. He made me cast away my basket and my flowers and led me into a large house which he had hired. He gave me an apartment in it, with slaves to wait on me. They brought me, by his order, rich clothes. It was as if my father Abdelaziz still lived, and it did not seem as if I had ever been in a miserable condition.

' When the merchant had finished the business which kept him in Bagdad, that is to say, had sold all the merchandise which he had brought thither, we took together the road to Bassora. My friends, who had not hoped to see me again, were not a little surprised to learn that I had been adopted by a man who was considered the richest merchant in the town. I strove to please the old man. He was charmed at my behaviour.

" 'Aboulcasem,' he often said to me, 'I am charmed to have met you at Bagdad. You seem to me very worthy of what I have done for you.'

' I was so touched with the sentiment which he

expressed for me that, far from abusing it, I did all I could to give him pleasure. Instead of seeking young people of my own age, I kept him company. I hardly left him. However, this good old man fell ill and the physicians could not cure him. Seeing himself in extremity, he made everyone retire and said to me :

“ It is time, my son, to reveal an important secret to you. If I had, as sole wealth, only this house with the riches which you see in it, I should think I was leaving you only a moderate fortune ; but all the wealth that I have amassed during the course of my life, although considerable for a merchant, is nothing in comparison with the treasure which is concealed in the house, and which I wish to discover to you. I shall not tell you how long, by whom, nor how it happens to be here, for I do not know. All that I know is that my grandfather in dying discovered it to my father, who also made me the same confidence a few days before his death.

“ But ” he continued, “ I have an advice to give you, and beware of despising it. You are naturally generous. When you see yourself in a position to follow out your inclination, you will not

fail to be prodigal with your wealth. You will receive magnificently the strangers who come to you. You will overwhelm them with presents, and you will do good to all those who implore your aid.

"This conduct, which I should highly approve if you could maintain it with impunity, will be the cause of your destruction. You will live with so much magnificence that you will excite the envy of the King of Bassora or the avarice of his ministers. They will suspect you of having a hidden treasure, and will spare no pains to discover it, and they will take it from you. To prevent this misfortune, you have only to follow my example. I have always, like my grandfather and my father, exercised my profession and enjoyed this treasure without display. We have indulged in no expense at which the world has been surprised."

'I did not fail to promise the merchant that I would imitate his prudence. He told me where the treasure was, and he assured me that however great an idea I might form of the wealth which it contained I should find it still more considerable than I had imagined. Indeed, after this generous

old man was dead, and as his only heir I had rendered him the last services, I took possession of all his goods, of which this house forms a part, and I went to see the treasure, I will admit to you, my lord, that I was astonished at it. If it is not inexhaustible it is at least so rich that I could not exhaust it were Heaven to allow me to live longer than other men.

'So far from keeping the promise which I made the merchant, I spread my riches broadcast. There is no one in Bassora who has not experienced my favours. Is not daring to touch a treasure, possessing it? And can I make a better use of it than by employing it to relieve the unfortunate, to receive strangers well, and to lead a delicious life.

'Everyone imagined at first that I was going to ruin myself a second time. "Had Aboulcasem," they said, "all the treasures of the Commander of the Faithful, he would dissipate them." But they were very much astonished when, instead of seeing the least disorder in my affairs, they appeared on the contrary to become day by day more flourishing. They could not conceive how I could augment my wealth whilst lavishly spending it.

'I, however, made so much display, that at last I roused envy against myself, as the old man had predicted. The rumour spread in the town that I had found a treasure. That was all that was wanted to attract to me greedy persons. The lieutenant of police came to see me.

"'I am,'" he said, "the lieutenant of police, and I come to ask you where the treasure is which enables you to live with so much magnificence."

'I was troubled at these words and remained silent. He concluded from my embarrassed manner that the reports about me in the town were not without foundation. But instead of pressing me to discover my treasure to him: "Lord Aboulcasem," he continued, "I discharge my duty like a sensible man. Make me a present worthy of my discretion and I will retire."

"How much do you require?" I said to him.

"I will content myself," he replied, "with ten gold sequins a day."

'I replied to him: "It is not enough, I will give you a hundred. You have only to come here every day or every month, and my treasurer will give them you."

‘The lieutenant of police was transported with joy when he heard these words.

“My lord,” he said, “I would that you had found a thousand treasures. Enjoy your wealth in peace. I shall never trouble your possession of it.”

He took a large sum in advance and went away. A little time after, the vizir Aboulfatah-Waschy sent for me, and having had me admitted into his cabinet, he said to me :

“O young man, I have learnt that you have discovered a treasure. You know that the fifth part belongs to God. You must give it to the king. Therefore pay the fifth part and you shall remain in tranquil possession of the four other parts.”

I replied : “My lord, I will admit to you that I have found a treasure, and at the same time I swear to you by the great God who has created us both, that I will not discover it, even if I were torn to pieces. But I undertake to give you every day a thousand gold sequins, provided that you then leave me in peace.”

Aboulfatah was as amenable as the lieutenant of police. He sent me a confidential man to whom

my treasurer gave thirty thousand sequins for the first month.

' This vizir, fearing no doubt that the King of Bassora would hear what was going on, preferred to tell him himself. This prince listened very attentively to him, and the matter seeming to him to merit investigation, he wished to see me. He received me laughing and said: "O young man, why do you not show me your treasure? Do you think me unjust enough to take it from you?"

"Sire," I replied, "may the life of your majesty endure with the centuries; but were my flesh torn from me with hot irons, I will not discover my treasure. I consent to pay to your majesty every day two thousand gold sequins. If you refuse to accept them, and you think it more desirable to have me put to death, you have only to command. I am ready to suffer all imaginable tortures rather than satisfy your curiosity."

' At this speech the king looked towards his vizir and asked his advice.

"Sire," said the minister, "the sum which he offers you is so considerable that it is the discovery

of a real treasure. Let this young man go. Let him live with his ordinary magnificence ; only let him be careful to keep exactly his word to your majesty."

'The king followed this advice. He caressed me much. And since that time, according to our agreement, I pay every year, to him as well as to the vizir and the lieutenant of police, more than a million and sixty thousand gold sequins.

'There, my lord, is what you wished to learn. You must no longer be surprised at the presents which I have made you, nor at all that you have seen here.'

When Aboulcasem had finished the account of his adventures, the caliph, animated by a violent desire to see the treasure, said to him :

'Is it possible that there is in the world a treasure which your generosity is not capable of soon exhausting ? No, I cannot believe it, and if it were not exacting too much from you, my lord, I would ask to see the treasure you possess, swearing to you by all that can make an oath inviolable that I will not abuse your confidence.'

The son of Abdelaziz seemed distressed at the speech of the caliph : 'I am sorry, my lord,' he

said, 'that you have this curiosity. I can only satisfy it on very disagreeable conditions.'

'No matter,' cried the prince, 'what these conditions may be, I submit to them without repugnance.'

'I must,' replied Aboulcasem, 'bind your eyes and conduct you without arms and bareheaded, with a scimitar in my hand, ready to strike you a thousand mortal blows if you violate the laws of hospitality. I know well,' he added, 'that I might be accused of imprudence, and that I ought not to yield to your desire; but I rely on the fidelity of your oaths, and moreover, I cannot bring myself to send away a guest discontented.'

'Pray,' said the caliph, 'satisfy my desires immediately.'

'That cannot be at once,' replied the young man; 'but stay here to-night. When all the servants are at rest, I will come and fetch you from the apartment to which I am going to conduct you.'

At these words he called, and, by the light of a great quantity of candles carried by slaves in gold candle-sticks, he conducted the prince into a magnificent room and retired to his own. The

slaves undressed the caliph, laid him to rest and retired, after having placed at the head and feet of the bed their candles, the perfumed wax of which gave out a pleasant scent in burning.

Instead of thinking of taking some repose, Haroun-al-Raschid awaited Aboulcasem impatiently. He did not fail to come and fetch him in the middle of the night, and said, 'My lord, all my servants are asleep, a profound silence reigns in the house, I can now show you my treasure on the conditions that I have told you.'

'Let us go,' replied the caliph rising, 'I am ready to follow you; and I swear by the Creator of heaven and earth, that you will not repent of having satisfied my curiosity.'

The son of Abdelaziz helped the prince to dress, then placed a bandage on his eyes; 'It is with regret, my lord,' he said, 'that I treat you thus'; your air and behaviour seem to be worthy of confidence.'

'I approve of these precautions,' interrupted the caliph, 'and I do not bear you ill-will because of them.'

Aboulcasem conducted him down a secret stairway into a garden of vast extent: and after

several turns, they both entered the place which contained the treasure. It was a deep and spacious underground place, of which a simple stone covered the entrance. First they found a long, sloping passage, very dark, at the end of which there was a great hall which was rendered very brilliant by several carbuncles. When they had arrived in this hall, the young man removed the bandage from the eyes of the caliph, who now saw with astonishment everything that presented itself to his sight.

A basin of white marble, fifty feet in circumference, appeared in the middle. It was full of great gold pieces, and all round were twelve columns of the same metal, which supported as many statues of precious stones admirably well worked.

Aboulcasem conducted the prince to the edge of the basin, and said to him, 'This basin is thirty feet deep. Look at this heap of gold pieces, it has as yet diminished only by a couple of inches. Do you think I can soon dissipate that ?'

Haroun, after having looked at the basin attentively, replied : 'There are, I admit, immense riches there ; but you can exhaust them.'

' Well,' replied the young man, ' when this basin is empty, I shall have recourse to what I am going to show you.'

Thus saying, he led him into another hall, still more brilliant than the first, and where there were several sofas of red brocade, adorned with an infinity of pearls and diamonds. There also in the middle was a marble basin. True, it was not as large as that in which the gold pieces were, but to compensate, it was full of rubies, topazes, emeralds, and all sorts of stones. Nothing could equal the surprise which the caliph then displayed. He could hardly believe he was awake.

This new basin seemed an enchantment to him. He had his gaze still fastened upon it, when the son of Abdelaziz called his attention to a golden throne on which were two persons who, he told him, were the first possessors of the treasure. They were a prince and princess who had on their heads crowns of diamonds. They both seemed full of life. They were lying at full length, and at their feet was an ebony table on which one read in letters of gold: 'I have amassed during a long life all the riches which are here. I have taken towns and castles which I have pillaged. I have conquered

kingdoms, and laid low all my enemies. I have been the most powerful king in the world, but all my power has yielded to that of death. Whoever sees me in the state in which I am, should open his eyes. Let him reflect that I have lived like him, and that he will die like me. Let him not fear to exhaust this treasure. He will never be able to come to the end of it. Let him make use of it to gather friends together and to lead an agreeable life; for, when he must die, all this wealth will not guarantee him against the common fate of all men.'

'I do not any longer disapprove of your conduct,' said Haroun to the young man, after having read these words. 'You are right in living as you do, and I condemn the advice which the old merchant gave you. But,' he added, 'I should like very much to know the name of this prince. What king can have possessed so much wealth? I am sorry this inscription does not inform me.'

The young man then showed the caliph another hall in which there were several very precious things, and among others some trees similar to that of which he had made him a present. The prince would willingly have spent the rest of the night

examining all that this marvellous subterranean place contained, if the son of Abdelaziz, fearing to be perceived by his servants, had not compelled him to leave before daybreak in the same manner in which he had conducted him thither, bare-headed and blindfold, while Aboulcasem held a scimitar in his hand, ready to cut off the caliph's head if he made the least effort to remove the bandage.

They traversed the garden and reascended the hidden staircase to the room where the emperor had slept. They still found the candles lit there. They conversed together till the break of day.

'After what I have just seen,' said the prince, 'to judge by the slave you have given me, I do not doubt that you have here the most beautiful women of the east.'

'My lord,' replied Aboulcasem, 'I have many beautiful slaves, but I can love none of them. Dardané, my dear Dardané, always fills my memory. It is in vain that I say to myself continually that she is dead, and that I ought not to think of her any longer. I am unfortunate enough not to be able to free myself from her image. It possesses me to such an extent, that in spite of all my riches, in the midst of all my prosperity, I

feel that I am not happy. Yes, I would a thousand times rather have only a modest fortune and possess Dardané, than live without her with all my treasures.'

The emperor admired the constancy of the son of Abdelaiz, but he exhorted him to make every effort to conquer a chimerical passion. He then renewed his thanks to him for the reception he had given him. After that, having returned to his caravanserai, he took the road to Bagdad, with all the servants, the page, the lovely slave, and all the presents which he had received from Aboulcasem.

Two days after the departure of this prince, the vizir Aboulsatah, having heard speak of the magnificent presents which Aboulcasem made every day to the strangers who went to see him, and moreover, astonished at the exactitude with which he paid him, as well as the king and the lieutenant of police, the promised sums, resolved to spare nothing in discovering where this treasure could be whence he drew such wealth. This minister was one of those wicked men to whom the greatest crimes cost nothing when they wish to satisfy themselves. He had a daughter of eighteen of ravishing beauty. She was called Balkis. She

had every good quality of heart and mind. Prince Aly, nephew of the King of Bassora, loved her devotedly. He had already asked her of her father and was soon to marry her.

Aboulfatah sent for her to his cabinet, and said to her : ' My daughter, I have need of you. I wish you to adorn yourself in your finest array and go to-night to Aboulcasem. You must do everything to charm this young man and induce him to discover to you the treasure which he has found.'

Balkis trembled at this speech and showed at once on her face the horror she had for the step which was exacted of her obedience.

' My lord,' she replied, ' what do you propose to your daughter ? Do you think of the peril to which you expose her ? Consider the shame with which you are about to cover her, the stigma you are setting on your honour and the outrage you will do the Prince Aly in sending the woman whom he loves upon such an errand.'

' I have reflected on all that,' replied the vizir ; ' but nothing can turn me from my resolution, and I command you to prepare to obey me.'

The young Balkis burst into tears at these words.

'In the name of God, my father,' she cried, 'do not force me yourself to dishonour you. Stifle this avaricious impulse which drives you to despoil a man of wealth which does not belong to you. Let him enjoy his riches in peace, instead of trying to snatch them from him.'

'Silence, impudent girl!' said the angry vizir; 'it ill becomes you to reflect upon my intentions: do not answer me further. I wish you to go to Aboulcasem, and I swear that if you return without having seen his treasure, I will plunge a dagger in your breast.'

Balkis seeing herself obliged to take such a dangerous step, retired to her apartment overwhelmed with sadness. She took rich clothes and adorned herself with jewels, without, however, making every addition possible through art to her charms; but there was no need for it. Her natural beauty was alone but too capable of inspiring love. Never maiden wished less or feared more to please than Balkis. She feared as much to appear too beautiful to the son of Abdelaziz as she was apprehensive of not being suffi-

ciently so when she appeared before the Prince Aly.

When the night had arrived and Aboulfatah judged it time for his daughter to go to Aboulcasem, he took her out very secretly and conducted her himself to the door of the young man's house, where he left her, after having told her again that he would kill her if she did not acquit herself well in the infamous part which he made her play. She knocked at the door and asked to speak to the son of Abdelaziz. A slave immediately led her into a room where his master, lying on a large sofa, was recalling to his memory his past misfortunes ; and, as often happened to him, was dreaming of his dear Dardané.

As soon as Balkis appeared, Aboulcasem rose to receive her. He made her a profound reverence, put out his hand to her with a respectful air and having obliged her to seat herself on the sofa he asked her why she had done him the honour of coming to see him. She replied, that from his reputation of being a very gallant young man, the fancy had taken her to join in a revel with him. At the same time she removed her veil and dazzled his eyes with a beauty which surprised him. In

spite of his indifference to women he could not with impunity look upon so much charm. He was affected by it.

'Beautiful lady,' he said, 'I thank my lucky star for having procured me so agreeable an adventure. I cannot enough rejoice in my happiness.'

After some minutes' conversation the supper-hour arrived. They both went and seated themselves at a table on which were several different dishes. A great number of pages and officers were there; but Aboulcasem made them retire, so that the lady might not be exposed to their glances. He proceeded to wait on her; he offered her everything of the best and poured out for her excellent wine in a cup enriched with rubies and emeralds. He drank too to keep her in countenance, and the more he looked at Balkis the more beautiful he found her. He made gallant speeches to her, and as the lady was not less witty than beautiful, she replied so brilliantly that he was charmed by her. He threw himself at her knees at the end of the repast. He took one of her hands, and pressing it between his, 'Lady,' he said, 'if your beautiful eyes dazzled me at first,

your conversation has completely enchanted me. You kindle in me a fire which will never die. I wish henceforth to be your slave, and to consecrate to you all the moments of my life.'

Saying these words, he kissed the hand of Balkis with such ardour, that the lady, frightened at the pressing danger which threatened her, changed countenance suddenly. She became paler than death; and losing all control, she assumed a melancholy air and her eyes were soon bathed in tears.

'What is the matter, madam?' said the young man, very surprised. 'Whence this sudden grief? What do these tears mean which penetrate my very soul? Is it I who make them flow? Am I unhappy enough to have said or done something which has displeased you? Speak! do not leave me, I beg, any longer in ignorance of the cause of this sad change in you.'

'My lord,' replied Balkis, 'I can dissimulate no longer. Modesty, fear, grief, and perfidy are warring within me, so that I can endure it no longer: I am going to break silence. I am deceiving you, Aboulcasem. I am a maiden of

quality. My father, who knows that you have a hidden treasure, wishes to make use of me to discover the place where it is hidden. He has ordered me to come to you, and to spare nothing to get you to show it me. I wished to rebel, but he swore to me that he would take my life if I returned without having seen it. What a cruel command for me! Had I not as a lover a prince whom I love devotedly, and who is soon to marry me, the step which my father makes me take would not appear the less terrible to me. Thus, my lord, if I come to you, it is with a repugnance that the fear of death alone can surmount.'

After the daughter of Aboulfatah had thus spoken, Aboulcasem said to her: 'Lady, I am glad that you have made known your sentiments to me. You shall not repent of this noble frankness. You shall see my treasure, and you shall be treated with all the respect you desire. However beautiful you are, whatever impression you have made on me, you have nothing to fear, you are here in safety. I renounce the hope I had formed of winning your love, and you can without blushing see again the happy lover, the tender interest in whom redoubles your charms.

Cease, then, to shed tears and to afflict yourself.'

'Ah, my lord!' cried Balkis at this speech, 'it is not without reason that you are esteemed the most generous of men. I am charmed at your noble conduct, and I shall not rest satisfied till I have found some occasion of showing my gratitude to you for it.'

After this conversation the son of Abdelaziz conducted the lady into the same room where the caliph had slept, and remained alone with her there until all was silent amongst his servants. Then, placing a bandage on the eyes of Balkis: 'Lady,' he said to her, 'pardon me for treating you thus, but I can only show you my treasure on this condition.'

'Do everything you wish, my lord,' she replied; 'I have so much confidence in your generosity that I will follow you wherever you wish. I have no other fear than that of not being able to sufficiently recognise your kindnesses.'

Aboulcasem took her by the hand, and, having descended into the garden by the hidden stairway, he led her into the underground place, where he removed her bandage. If the caliph had been

surprised at seeing so many gold pieces and precious stones, Balkis was much more so. Everything she saw caused her extreme astonishment. Nevertheless, what most attracted her attention, and what she could not tire of looking at, were the first possessors of the treasure. She read the inscription to be seen at their feet. As the queen had a necklace of pearls as large as pigeons' eggs, Balkis could not help exclaiming at it. Whereupon Aboulcaseim detached it from the neck of the princess, and put it on that of the young lady, saying that her father would judge by that that she had seen the treasure, and so, that he might be the better persuaded of it, he begged her to take some of the finest jewels. She took a good quantity of them, which he chose himself.

However, the young man fearing that the day would break whilst she was amusing herself with looking at all the subterranean marvels, which could not tire her curiosity, he replaced the bandage on her eyes, led her out and conducted her to a room where they conversed together till sunrise. Then the lady, after having repeated to the son of Abdelaziz that she would never forget his kindness and his generosity, took leave of him, returned home, and

went to give an account to her father of what had passed.

The vizir, solely absorbed in his avarice, impatiently awaited his daughter. He feared she would not be charming enough to captivate Aboulcasem.

He was in an inconceivable state of agitation. But when he saw her return with the necklace, and she showed him the jewels which the young man had given her, he was transported with joy.

'Well, my daughter,' he said, 'have you seen the treasure ?'

'Yes, my lord,' replied Balkis, 'and to give you a just idea of it, I will tell you, that were all the kings of the earth together to unite their riches, they would not be comparable with those of Aboulcasem, but, however great may be the wealth of the young man, I am less charmed by it than by his politeness and generosity.'

At the same time she related the whole adventure to him. He was indifferent to the nobility of the son of Abdelaziz, and he would have preferred his daughter's sorrow to not knowing where the treasure was which he wished to discover.

During this time Haroun-al-Raschid advanced

towards Bagdad. As soon as this prince had returned to his palace he set his grand vizir at liberty, he restored him to confidence, and, after having detailed the journey to him :

‘Giasar,’ he said, ‘what shall I do ? You know that the gratitude of caliphs ought to surpass the pleasure that has been given them. If I content myself by sending to the magnificent Aboulcasem what I have that is rarest and most precious in my treasury, that would be very little to him. How, then, can I outdo him in generosity ?’

‘My lord,’ said the vizir, ‘if your majesty will believe me, you will write this very day to the King of Bassora to order him to remit the government of his state to the young Aboulcasem. We will immediately send off the courier, and in a few days I will go myself to bear the patents to the new king.’

The caliph approved of this suggestion. ‘You are right,’ he said to his minister : ‘that will be the way to acquit myself towards Aboulcasem, and to revenge myself upon the King of Bassora and his vizir, who have concealed from me that they receive considerable sums from this young man. It is even just to punish them for the violence they have done him, and they are not

worthy of the places they occupy. He wrote immediately to the King of Bassora and sent off the courier. He took himself to the apartment of Zobeide to relate to her also the success of his journey, and to present to her the little page, the tree, and the peacock. He also made her a present of the maiden.

Zobeide found her so charming that, smiling, she told the emperor that she accepted this beautiful slave with much more pleasure than the other presents. The prince kept only the cup for himself: the vizir Giasar had all the rest, and this minister, according to his resolve, arranged everything for his departure a few days after.

The courier of the caliph was no sooner arrived in the town of Bassora than he hastened to remit his despatch to the king, who could not read it without feeling deeply pained. He showed it to his vizir :

'Aboulfatah,' he said, 'see what fatal order the Commander of the Faithful sends me. Can I avoid obeying it?'

'Yes, my lord,' replied the minister. 'Do not abandon yourself to your affliction. Aboulcasem must be destroyed. I am going, without

taking his life, to make everyone believe that he is dead. I shall keep him so well concealed that he will never be seen. By this means you will always remain on the throne, and you will have all the riches of this young man: for when we are masters of his person we will make him suffer such tortures that we will make him discover his treasure.'

'Do what you wish,' replied the king; 'but what shall we say to the caliph?'

'Rely upon me for that too,' replied the vizir. 'The Commander of the Faithful will be deceived like the others. Only let me execute the plan which I contemplate, and don't let the rest cause you any anxiety.'

Aboulfatah, accompanied by several courtiers who did not know his intention, went to see Aboulcasem. He received them as the first persons of the court. He regaled them magnificently. He made the vizir seat himself in the place of honour and overwhelmed him with civilities, without having the least suspicion of his perfidy. Whilst they were all at table and were drinking excellent wines, the treacherous Aboulfatah threw skilfully into Aboulcasem's cup, with-

out anyone perceiving it, a powder which deprived the drinker of all feeling, the body falling into lethargy and resembling a corpse long dead.

The young man had no sooner lifted the cup to his lips than weakness overtook him. His servants advanced to support him ; but soon, seeing in him all the indications of a dead man, they laid him on a sofa and began to utter terrible cries. All the guests, struck by a sudden terror, remained seized with astonishment. As for Aboulsatah, it is impossible to say how far he carried his dissimulation. He did not content himself with feigning an immoderate grief : he began to tear his garments, and by his example incite all the others to grief. He then ordered a coffin of ivory and ebony to be made ; and whilst they were at work on it, he took possession of all the effects of Aboulcasem, and placed them in sequestration in the king's palace.

The rumour of the young man's death spread in the town. Everyone of both sexes put on mourning and flocked to the door of his house, with bare heads and feet. The old men and the young, the women and the girls, were in tears. They made the air resound with cries and

lamentations. One would have said they mourned, some an only son, others a brother, and the others a dearly loved husband.

Rich and poor were both equally affected by his death. The rich mourned a friend who received them agreeably in his house, and the poor a benefactor whose charity they could never tire. There was general consternation.

The unhappy Aboulcasem was enclosed in the coffin, which the people, by order of Aboulfatah, bore outside the town to a great cemetery where there were several tombs, and among others a magnificent one where rested the father of this vizir with some other persons of his family.

They put the coffin in the tomb, and the treacherous Aboulfatah, with his head on his knees, beat his breast. He made every demonstration of a man possessed by despair. All who saw him had pity on him and prayed heaven to console him.

As night approached all the people retired into the town, and the vizir remained with two of his slaves in the tomb, the door of which they doubly locked. Then they lit a fire, warmed water in a silver basin, then, having taken Aboulcasem from

the coffin, they washed him with warm water. The young man recovered his senses by degrees. He cast his eyes on Aboulfatah, whom he recognised.

'Ah, my lord!' he said, 'where are we, and to what a state do I see myself reduced?'

'Miserable fellow,' replied the minister, 'learn that it is I who cause your misfortune. I have brought you here to have you in my power, and to make you suffer a thousand ills if you do not discover your treasure to me. I shall break your body in pieces. I shall invent every day new tortures to make your life insupportable to you. In a word, I shall not cease to torment you if you do not give up to me those hidden riches which enable you to live with more than kingly magnificence.'

'You can do all you wish,' replied Aboulcasem, 'I shall not reveal my treasure.'

Hardly had he said these words than the cowardly and cruel Aboulfatah had the unhappy son of Abdelaziz held by his slaves, and drew from beneath his robe a whip made of intertwined lion-skin thongs, with which he struck him for some time, and with such violence that the young man

fainted. When the vizir saw him in this state, he ordered his slaves to replace him in his coffin, and leaving him in the tomb which he had well closed, he went home.

He went the next morning to give an account to the king of what he had done.

'Sire,' he said to him, 'I experienced yesterday the firmness of Aboulcasem. It has not yet been belied, but I do not think it will resist the torments which I am preparing for him.'

The prince, who was not less barbarous than his minister, said to him :

'Vizir, I am pleased with you. I hope we shall soon learn where the treasure is. However, the courier must be sent back without further delay. What are we going to write to the caliph ?'

'Let us inform him,' replied Aboulfatah, 'that Aboulcasem having learnt that your place was given to him, was so overjoyed at it, and indulged in such great rejoicings, that he died suddenly in a debauch.'

The king approved of this idea. They wrote immediately to Haroun-al-Raschid and sent back his courier.

The vizir, who flattered himself that Aboul-

casem would that very day discover his treasure to him, left the town with the resolution to go and make him suffer fresh tortures. But on arriving at the tomb, he was surprised to find the door open. He entered quite troubled, and not seeing the son of Abdelaziz in the coffin, he thought that he had lost his senses. He returned promptly to the palace and related this accident to the king, who felt himself seized with a mortal terror, and said : 'O Heaven, what will become of us ? Since this young man has escaped us we are lost. He will not fail to go to Bagdad and speak to the caliph.'

Aboulsatah, on his side, in despair at having no longer by his side the victim of his avarice and cruelty, said to the king his master : 'Would to Heaven that I had yesterday taken his life. He would not cause us so much anxiety. We must not, however,' he added, 'despair yet. If he has taken flight, as it is idle to doubt, he cannot be far from here. Let us go with all the soldiers of the guard. Let us search all the environs of the town. I hope we shall find him.'

The king decided, without difficulty, on such an important search. He assembled all his

soldiers, and dividing them into two bodies, he gave one to his vizir. He put himself at the head of the other ; and these troops scoured the country.

Whilst they were seeking Aboulcasem in all the villages, in the woods, and in the mountains, the vizir Giasfar, who had started on his way, met the courier on the road, who said to him : ' My lord, it is useless to go to Bassora if Aboulcasem is the sole object of your journey ; for the young man is dead. His obsequies have been held a few days ago. My eyes have been the sad witness of them.'

Giasfar, who anticipated with pleasure seeing the new king, and presenting him with his patents himself, was very afflicted at his death. He shed tears, and thinking it useless to continue his journey, he retraced his steps.

As soon as he had arrived at Bagdad, he went to the palace with the courier. The sadness which appeared upon their countenances made the caliph understand in advance that they had some misfortune to announce to him.

' Ah ! Giasfar,' cried the prince, ' you have soon returned. What news do you bring me ? '

'Commander of the Faithful,' replied the vizir, 'you doubtless will not expect the sad news which I am going to tell you. Aboulcasem is no more. Since your departure from Bassora, this young man has lost his life.'

• Haroun-al-Raschid had no sooner heard these words than he threw himself down from his throne. He remained for some moments stretched on the ground without giving any sign of life. They hastened to succour him, and when he had recovered from his swoon, he sought with his eyes the courier who came from Bassora, and having perceived him, he asked for his despatch. The courier presented it to him. The prince read it with much attention. He then shut himself up in his cabinet with Giafar. He showed him the letter of the King of Bassora. After having re-read it several times, the caliph said :

'That does not seem natural. I suspect the King of Bassora and his vizir. Instead of executing my orders they have killed Aboulcasem.'

'My lord,' said Giafar in his turn, 'the same suspicion crosses my mind, and I would advise the arrest of both of them.'

'That is what I this moment am resolved on,'

replied Haroun. ‘Take ten thousand cavalry of my guard : march to Bassora. Seize the two guilty persons and bring them to me here. I wish to avenge the death of the most generous of all men.’

Giafar obeyed : he chose ten thousand horse and set out on the march with them.

Let us now return to the son of Abdelaziz and see why the vizir, Aboulfatah, did not find him any longer in the tomb where he had left him. This young man, after a long faint, was beginning to recover his senses, when he felt himself seized by vigorous arms, which drew him from the coffin and placed him on the ground. He thought it was the vizir and his slaves who wished to begin to ill-treat him again.

‘Tyrants,’ he said to them, ‘give me death if you are capable of pity ! Spare me tortures which benefit you nothing, since I tell you again that your torments will never tear my secret from me !’

‘Fear nothing, young man,’ said one of the persons who had drawn him from his coffin ; ‘instead of coming to ill-treat you, we come to your help.’

At these words Aboulcasem opened his eyes, looked at his liberators, and recognised among them the young lady to whom he had shown his treasure.

'Ah! madam,' he said, 'is it you to whom I owe my life?'

'Yes, my lord,' replied Balkis, 'it is to me and to the Prince Aly, my lover, whom you see here. Informed of all your generosity, he has wished to share with me the pleasure of delivering you from death.'

'It is true,' said the Prince Aly, 'and I would a thousand times expose my life rather than let so generous a man perish.'

The son of Abdelaziz, having entirely recovered his senses with the aid of some drink given to him, thanked the lady and Prince Aly in proportion to the service rendered, and asked them how they had known that he still lived.

'My lord,' said Balkis, 'I am the daughter of the vizir Aboulfatah. I have not been duped by the false rumour of your death. I suspected my father of all he has done, and I have won over one of his slaves who has told me everything. This slave is one of the two who were here with him,

and as he was entrusted with the key of the tomb, he confided it to me. I then had the Prince Aly informed immediately, and he hastened to join me, with some of his most faithful domestics. We came with all speed, and we thank Heaven for not having arrived too late.'

'O God,' said Aboulcasem, 'can so cowardly and cruel a father have so generous a daughter?'

'Come, my lord,' said the Prince Aly, 'let us lose no time. I do not doubt but that the vizir, not finding you any longer in the tomb to-morrow, will have you searched for with great care; but I am going to conduct you to my house. You will be in safety there. They will never suspect me of having given you a refuge.'

They covered Aboulcasem with a slave's robe, after which they all left the tomb, leaving it open, and took the road to the town. Balkis returned home and gave back the key of the tomb to the slave, and the Prince Aly took the son of Abdelaziz to his house and kept him so well hidden that his enemies could learn no news of him.

Aboulcasem remained in the house of the Prince Aly, who treated him well in every way, until the

king and the vizir, despairing of finding him, ceased searching for him.

Then the Prince Aly gave him a very fine horse, loaded him with sequins and precious stones, and said to him, 'You can now escape. The roads are open to you. Your enemies do not know what has become of you. Go where you wish.'

The son of Abdelaziz thanked the generous prince for his kindness, and assured him that he would be eternally grateful to him. Prince Aly embraced him, saw him depart, and prayed Heaven to guide him. Aboulcasem took the road to Bagdad and arrived there happily after several days' march.

When he had arrived in this town, the first thing he did was to go to the place where the merchants assemble.

The hope of seeing him whom he had entertained at Bassora, and relating to him his misfortune, was his only consolation. He was mortified at not finding him. He went all over the town, and sought his features in the faces of all the men he met. Feeling tired, he arrived before the caliph's palace. The little page whom he had given to the caliph was then at a window, and the child,

having by chance cast his eyes upon him, recognised him. He ran immediately to the caliph's apartment.

'My lord,' he said to him, 'I have just seen my former master at Bassora.'

Haroun placed no faith in what he said.

'You are mistaken,' he replied. 'Aboulcasem lives no more. Led away by some resemblance, you must have taken another for him.'

'No, no ! Commander of the Faithful,' replied the page, 'I am sure it is he. I recognised him at once.'

Although the caliph did not believe this news, he nevertheless wished to examine if it were true. He sent immediately one of his officers with the page, to see if the man in question were really the son of Abdelaziz.

They found him still in the same place, for, thinking that he had recognised the little page, he waited for the child to reappear at the window.

When the page was convinced that he was not mistaken, he threw himself at the feet of Aboulcasem, who lifted him up, and asked him if he had the honour to belong to the caliph.

'Yes, my lord,' replied the child ; 'it is the Commander of the Faithful himself whom you have received at Bassora, and it is to him you have given me. Come with me, my lord, the caliph will be very pleased to see you.'

At this speech the surprise of the young man of Bassora was extreme. He let himself be led into the palace by the page and the officer, and he was soon introduced into the apartment of Haroun. The prince was seated on his sofa. He felt extraordinarily moved on seeing Aboulcasem. He rose eagerly, went towards the young man and held him in a long embrace without being able to say a word, so transported was he with joy.

When he had recovered a little from the extreme emotions which this adventure had caused him, he said to the son of Abdelaziz : 'O young man, open your eyes and recognise your happy guest. It is I whom you have received so well, and to whom you have made presents unequalled by those of kings.'

At these words, Aboulcasem, who was not less troubled than the caliph, whom from respect he had not dared to look at, gazed at him, and recognising him, 'O my sovereign master !' he cried ;

‘O king of the world, is it you who came to your slave’s house?’

Thus saying, he threw himself face downwards on the ground at the feet of the caliph, who lifted him up and made him seat himself beside him on the sofa.

‘How is it possible,’ he said, ‘that you are still alive?’

Then Aboulcasem related all the cruelties of Aboulfatah, and the chance by which he had been snatched from the fury of the vizir.

Haroun listened very attentively to him, and said : ‘I am the cause of these last misfortunes of yours. Having returned to Bagdad I wished to begin to acquit myself towards you. I sent a courier to the King of Bassora. I informed him that my intention was that he should remit his crown to you. Instead of executing my orders he resolved to take your life, for you must be convinced that Aboulfatah would soon have caused your death. The hope which he had that torture would soon oblige you to discover your treasure to him alone made him delay your death. But you shall be revenged. Giafar, with a great number of troops, has gone to Bassora. I have ordered him to seize

your two persecutors and bring them to me. You will remain in my palace, and you will be waited on there by my officers as though you were myself.'

Saying these words, he took the young man by the hand and led him down into a garden filled with the rarest flowers. In it were several basins of marble, porphyry, and jasper, filled with an infinity of beautiful fish. In the middle of the garden, upon twelve very high columns of black marble, was a dome, the roof of which was of sandal and aloe wood. The intervals between the columns were enclosed by a double golden trellis which formed all round an aviary full of thousands and thousands of canaries of different colours, of nightingales, of warblers, and other harmonious birds, who mingled their voices in a charming concert.

The baths of Haroun-al-Raschid were under this dome. The prince and his guest bathed, after which several officers covered them with the finest linen which had never been used before. Aboulcasem was then reclothed in rich garments. Then the caliph led him into a hall where he made him eat with him. They brought them

meats and cates. They served to them Turkish and Arabian pomegranates, Syrian apples, grapes of Meccah and Aleppo, and pears from Ispahan. After they had eaten the meat and fruits and drunk a delicious wine, the caliph conducted Aboulcasem to the apartment of Zobeide.

This princess appeared on a golden throne in the midst of all her slaves, who were standing divided into two files. Some had tambourines, others mellow flutes, and others harps. They did not make their instruments heard then. They all listened attentively to a girl more beautiful than the others, who sang a song whose burden was 'Love not once, but love through life ;' and while she sang, the maiden whom Aboulcasem had given to the caliph played her lute of aloe wood, ivory, sandal wood, and ebony.

As soon as Zobeide perceived the emperor and the son of Abdelaziz, she descended from her throne to receive them.

'Madam,' said Haroun to her, 'let me present to you my host at Bassora.'

The young man immediately prostrated himself with his face to the earth before the princess.

But whilst he was in this position a noise was suddenly heard among the slaves. She who had just sung, having cast her eyes on Aboulcasem, gave a great cry, and fainted.

The emperor and Zobeide turned immediately towards the slave, and the son of Abdclaziz, having risen also, looked at her; but he had no sooner seen her than he swooned. His eyes grew dark, a mortal pallor overspread his face. They thought he was going to die. The caliph, prompt to succour him, took him in his arms and restored him by degrees from his swoon.

When Aboulcasem had recovered his senses, he said to the prince: 'Commander of the Faithful, you know the adventure which I had in Cairo. This slave whom you see is the person who was thrown with me into the Nile; it is Dardané.'

'Is it possible?' cried the emperor. 'Let Heaven be for ever praised for such a marvellous event!'

During this time the slave, with the help of her companions, also recovered her senses. She wished to prostrate herself at the feet of the caliph, who prevented her, and asked her by what miracle

she was still alive after being thrown into the Nile.

'Commander of the Faithful,' she said, 'I fell into the nets of a fisher, who by chance drew them in at that moment. He was rather surprised at having made such a haul, and as he perceived that I still breathed, he carried me into his house, where, restored to life through his care, I related my sad story to him. He appeared alarmed; he was afraid lest the Sultan of Egypt should learn that he had saved me. So, fearing to lose his life for having saved mine, he hastened to sell me to a slave-merchant who was leaving for Bagdad. This merchant brought me to this town and presented me shortly afterwards to the Princess Zobeide, who bought me.'

Whilst the slave was speaking, the caliph considered her attentively, and finding her charmingly beautiful, 'Aboulcasem,' he cried, as soon as she had finished speaking, 'I am no longer surprised that you should have always preserved the memory of so beautiful a person. I thank Heaven for having conducted her here to enable me to acquit myself towards you. Dardané is no longer a slave, she is free. I think, madam,' he

added, turning to Zobeide, ‘you will not oppose her liberty.’

‘No, my lord,’ replied the princess, ‘I agree to it with joy, and I hope these two lovers will taste the sweetness of a long and perfect union, after the misfortunes which have separated them.’

‘This is not all,’ replied Haroun. ‘I wish their marriage to be celebrated in my palace, and that there should be public rejoicings for three days in Bagdad. I cannot treat my host of Bassora with too much honour.’

‘Ah, my lord !’ said Aboulcasem, throwing himself at the emperor’s feet, ‘if you are above men in rank you are still more so in generosity. Permit me to discover my treasure to you and abandon the possession of it to you from this moment.’

‘No, no,’ replied the caliph ; ‘remain in tranquil enjoyment of your treasure ; I even renounce the right that I have over it ; and may you live long enough to exhaust it.’

Zobeide begged the son of Abdelaziz and Dardané to relate their adventures to her, and she had them written in letters of gold. After that, the emperor ordered the preparations for their marriage, which was celebrated with much pomp.

The public rejoicings which followed it were still continuing when the vizir Giafar returned with the troops, bringing Aboulfatah well bound. As for the King of Bassora, he had died of grief at not having been able to find Aboulcasem.

As soon as Giafar had given an account of his errand to his master, a scaffold was raised before the palace and the wicked Aboulfatah was made to mount it.

All the people, informed of the cruelty of this vizir, instead of being touched by his misfortune expressed impatience to see his execution. Already the executioner had the sabre in his hand, ready to cut off the head of the culprit, when the son of Abdelaziz, prostrating himself before the caliph, said : ‘Commander of the Faithful, grant my prayers for the life of Aboulfatah. Let him live ! let him be the witness of my happiness ! let him see all the kindness you have for me, will he not be punished enough ?’

‘O, too generous Aboulcasem,’ cried the emperor, ‘how well you deserve to reign ! How fortunate the people of Bassora will be to have you for their king.’

‘My lord,’ said the young man, ‘I have another

favour to ask of you. Give to Prince Aly the throne which you destine for me. Let him reign with the lady who has had the generosity to deliver me from her father's fury. These two lovers are worthy of this honour. As for me, cherished and protected by the Commander of the Faithful, I have no need of a crown. I am above kings.'

The caliph, to reward the Prince Aly for the service which he had rendered to the son of Abdelaziz, sent him patents and made him King of Bassora. But finding Aboulfatah too culpable to accord him liberty with his life, he ordered him to be shut up in a dark tower for the rest of his days. When the people of Bagdad knew that it was the injured man himself who had asked for the life of his enemy, great praise was given to the young Aboulcasem, who left shortly afterwards for Bassora with his dear Dardané, both escorted by troops of the caliph's guard, and followed by a great number of officers.

Sutlumemé here finished the story of the strange adventures of Aboulcasem of Bassora. All the women of the Princess of Cashmere applauded her greatly. Some praised the magnifi-

cence and generosity of the young man of Bassora, the others maintained that the Caliph Haroun-al-Raschid was not less generous than he. Others, devoted only to constancy, said that Aboulcasem had been a very faithful lover. Then Farrukhnaz said :

'I do not agree with you : Balkis nearly made him forget Dardané. I wish a lover whom death robs of his mistress, to preserve always such tender remembrance of her as to make him incapable of a new passion, but men do not pride themselves on such great constancy.'

'Pardon, madam,' said Sutlumemé, 'men have been known whose fidelity has never given way. You will be persuaded of it if you will listen to the story of Coulouse and the beautiful Dilara.'

'Well,' replied Farrukhnaz, 'I permit you to relate it to us.'

The nurse immediately began it thus.

III

Story of Couloufe and of the beautiful Dilara



Upon a time there was at Damascus an old merchant named Abdallah, who was considered the richest of his colleagues.

But he was unhappy. He had been in all parts of the world, and exposed himself to thousands and thousands of dangers in the amassing of wealth, but he had no children to share his fortune.

He spared, however, nothing to procure the favour of Heaven: he opened his gates to the poor, and exercised endless charity to the dervishes, inviting them at the same time to pray God to grant him a son. He even founded hospitals and convents, and had mosques erected: but all was useless. Abdallah lost all hope of being blessed with a child.

One day he sent for an Indian physician whose capacities were much praised. He seated him at his table and after having well regaled him, he said to him :

'O doctor, I have long desired passionately to have a son.'

'My lord,' replied the Indian, 'it is a favour that depends on God. It is, however, permitted to man to seek means to obtain it.'

'Command me to do what is necessary to that end,' replied Abdallah, 'and I assure you that I will do it.'

'Firstly,' said the physician, 'buy a young slave, tall and straight as a cypress. She must have an agreeable countenance, red cheeks and bright eyes. Her voice ought to be sweet, her manner animated, and her conversation bright. Before buying this slave, you must pass forty days in retirement, in solitude and in prayer, leaving your mind unoccupied with any business. During all this time, you must only eat the flesh of black sheep and only drink old wine. If you observe all these things exactly, there is reason to hope that Heaven will grant you a son.'

Abdallah did not fail to obey the sage, and

in time Heaven heard his prayer and vouchsafed him a son.

To celebrate the birth of the child, who was named Couloufe, Abdallah assembled all his friends, gave them a feast, and gave large alms to return thanks to Heaven for having crowned his wishes.

Couloufe grew up, and in proportion as he grew bigger he was instructed in new matters. He had several masters who found him very well disposed to profit by their lessons. They taught him the Hebrew, Greek, Turkish, and Indian tongues, and to form properly the characters of all these languages.

They were not content with making him learn the Koran, he was made to read the commentaries on it. He understood its mystical meaning. He was above all well instructed in the doctrine of predestination. He also knew that which was lawful and that which was unlawful, as well as the questions of ambiguity and certainty. His teachers did not wish him to be ignorant of the history of the Arab tribes, the history of Persia, as well as the annals of the Kings. Further, he learnt moral philosophy, philosophy, medicine and astronomy.

He was not eighteen years of age when, besides all the things I have named, he knew yet others.

He was a good poet and a clever musician. He was, moreover, perfect in all bodily exercises. No one ever drew the bow, nor manipulated the sword and lance with more address and vigour. In fact, he was a young man of accomplished merit.

What a satisfaction for a father to have such a son! Abdallah loved him more than life, and could not live for a moment without him. However, death, who grudges happiness to the dwellers upon earth, soon came to take away the old merchant.

Knowing himself about to die, he made Couloufe sit at the side of his bed, and employed his last moments in giving him wise counsels. After his death and his funeral, his son took possession of all his goods.

But this young man was no sooner master of his riches than he began to dissipate them. He had a palace built, bought beautiful slaves, and chose many friends to be the companions of his debauch. He spent his days in amusing himself with them: there was profusion of the most delicate dishes and the best wines in his house.

Feasts, dances, and concerts were the order of the day. He lived in this way for several years, as if the source of his pleasures were inexhaustible. Nevertheless he consumed all his patrimony. Then he was obliged to sell his palace and his slaves, and he finally found himself without means, which greatly rejoiced his enemies.

He then repented of his prodigality. He went to all the youths who had contributed to his ruin.

'My friends,' he said to them, 'you have seen me in prosperity, and now you see me in want. I appeal to you. Help me to rise from my fall. Remember the offers of help that you made me when you were at my table. I do not doubt that you are touched by the state in which I find myself, and that you will make some efforts to bring me out of it.'

It was thus the unhappy Couloufe endeavoured to excite the gratitude of his friends and to engage their help. But he spoke to deaf ears. Some said they were sorry to see him in such a deplorable situation, and contented themselves with praying Heaven to have pity on him. Others, adding harshness to ingratitude, even refused him the consolation of pity, and turned their backs on him.

'O false friends,' he cried, 'how well your harsh and ungrateful conduct punishes me for having been credulous enough to imagine that you really loved me !'

The son of Abdallah, more grieved at having been the dupe of the false friendship of his companions in riot than at having dissipated all his wealth, resolved to leave Damascus where there were so many witnesses of his misfortune. He took the road to the country of the Tartars, and betook himself to Caracoram, where then reigned Cabal-Kan. He went to lodge in a caravanserai, where, with the money that remained to him, he bought for himself a robe and turban of Indian cloth. He spent whole days in walking about the town. He went into the gardens to see everything that was of interest, and as soon as night approached he retired to his caravanserai.

One day he heard it said that the King of the Tartars was preparing to make war ; that two neighbouring kings, who paid him a considerable yearly tribute, would not pay it him any longer, that they had leagued themselves together, and that they had already troops afoot to oppose

Cabal-Kan, if he undertook to penetrate into their country. Couloufe, having heard this news, went to offer his services to the king, who enrolled him in his army. The young man distinguished himself in this war by exploits which earned for him the admiration of the soldiers, the esteem of the officers, and the protection of Prince Mirgehan, son of the King of the Tartars. His success did not stop there ; as, following the example of those two neighbouring kings, other princes who also paid tribute rose, Cabal-Kan was obliged to turn his arms against these new enemies, whom he reduced to beg for peace. The son of Abdallah showed again so much courage on the occasions given to him to distinguish himself, that Mirgehan wished to have him always with him in close companionship.

Couloufe soon gained the friendship of this prince, who, discovering in him every day more merit, honoured him with all his confidence. Soon after Cabal-Kan died. The prince, his son, succeeded him, and was hardly on the throne before he overwhelmed the son of Abdallah with favours and made him his favourite. Couloufe, seeing that his affairs had entirely changed in character and that

he had never been happier, said to himself, all the events of our life must be noted in Heaven. When I lived in pleasure at Damascus, was there any appearance of my possible falling in want, and when I came to Caracoram, could I reasonably have hoped that I should become what I am? No, no, all our prosperity and our misfortunes come to us unsuspected. Let us live then according to our desires, and submit ourselves to the fate which we cannot avoid.

It was thus that the son of Abdallah reasoned, and following this principle, he followed his inclination without constraint.

One day that he was leaving the palace he met an old woman covered with a veil of Indian cloth, tied with ribands and silken bands. She had a great necklace of pearls, a stick in her hand, and five slaves, also veiled, accompanied her.

He approached the old woman and asked her whether these slaves were for sale.

'Yes,' replied the old woman.

He then lifted their veils and saw that these slaves were young and beautiful. One particularly he found very charming.

'Sell me this one,' he said to the old woman ; 'she pleases me.'

'No,' she replied, 'I do not wish to sell her to you. You appear to me a gallant gentleman. You must have a more beautiful one. I have others in my house. I have Turkish, Greek, Sclavonian, Ionian, Ethiopian, German, Cashmerian, Chinese, Armenian, and Georgian maidens. I will present them all to you, and you will take the one that pleases you most. You have only to follow me.'

Saying these words she preceded Couloufe, who followed her.

When they came opposite to a mosque the old woman said to him :

'O young man, wait here a moment for me. I am going to return.'

He waited nearly an hour, and began to grow impatient, but she reappeared with a girl bearing a bundle. Inside it was a veil and a woman's outer garment, with which the old woman clothed Couloufe, saying to him :

'My lord, we are honourable people and of good family. It would not be seemly to receive a stranger in our house.'

'My good mother,' he replied, 'you have only to command. I will do all that you wish.'

He put on the outer garment and placed the veil on his head. Then he accompanied the old woman, who led him into a quarter unknown to him. They entered a large mansion, or rather a palace, for everything that presented itself to view had an air of grandeur and magnificence.

After having traversed a vast court paved with jasper, they reached a saloon of prodigious extent, in the midst of which there was a porphyry basin filled with water, where several small ducks were disporting themselves, and all around were gilt cages in which were a thousand birds of different species who made the air resound with their song.

Whilst Coulouse was regarding attentively these birds and all the other things which contributed to make this the most diverting room in the world, a young woman entered who approached the young man with a laughing air. She made him a profound reverence, and after he had saluted her, she took his hand and begged him to seat himself on the cushions of gold brocade placed on sofas of the same stuff.

As soon as he was seated, she herself took the trouble to wipe his face and eyes with a hand-kerchief of the finest linen. Whilst rendering him this agreeable service, she smiled and cast glances at him which soon drove him beside himself. He found her to his liking, and was about to make up his mind to purchasc her, when another maiden appeared, whose fair hair floated in curls upon her uncovered shoulders, and who was much more beautiful than the first. She advanced gracefully towards the son of Abdallah, took his hands, kissed them, and was about to lave his feet in a golden basin ; but he would not allow it, and struck by her beauty, he rose to throw himself at her knees, resolved to devote himself to this one. But he remained suddenly motionless and like a man who has lost the use of his senses, for he perceived twenty young girls, all more charming the one than the other.

They accompanied a young person still more beautiful and more richly dressed than they, and who seemed to be their mistress. Couloufe seemed to see the moon surrounded by stars, and at the sight of this ravishing vision he fainted.

All the slaves ran immediately to his succour,

and having brought him round from his swoon, the lady who had caused it addressed him thus :

'Be welcome,' she said, 'poor bird caught by the legs.'

Couloufe kissed the earth, and uttered a deep sigh.

They seated him on a sofa. A cooling drink was brought in a golden cup enriched with jewels. The lady drank of it, and presented the rest to the young man. Then she seated herself near him and remarking that he was so agitated that he could not utter a word ; 'Whence arises the trouble which agitates you ?' she said to him. 'Banish this sombre sadness which appears in your eyes. Doubtless you are already wearied with us ; our company displeases you——'

'Ah ! beautiful lady,' he replied, looking at her tenderly ; 'cease, I pray you, cease to insult me. You know too well that one cannot see your charms with impunity. I am, I admit, beside myself ; an inconceivable trouble agitates me——'

'Be cheered,' interrupted the lady, 'and remember that you come here to buy a slave. Let us all sit down to table ; I hope that we shall be able to divert you.'

Thus saying, she took Couloufe by the hand, and conducted him into a hall where they seated themselves with all the other ladies at a long table covered with baskets of sandal wood filled with sweetmeats and dried preserves ; Omani preserves, Shami apples, Omani quinces, Sultani oranges, and other things beside. After having eaten, they rose. A basin was brought to them, and a golden ewer. The ladies washed their hands in willow-flower water with cakes of almonds, with Bagdad soap, and powder of aloes ; then, having dried their hands with rose-coloured silk handkerchiefs, they went to the wine-chamber. It was an agreeable retreat, decorated by several pots of roses and other sweet-smelling flowers, which bordered a marble basin full of delicious water. This basin served to keep the wine cool, and contributed, by mingling its freshness with the odour of the flowers, to make this retreat delicious. All the ladies made Couloufe drink, and drank also themselves ; so that the company returned to the first room rather elated.

There, some of these ladies began to dance, and the others to play the harp, the guitar of David called kanoon, the kemangeh viola, and

the nay flute. But with all the delicacy with which they played these instruments, they did not approach the lady with whom the son of Abdallah was enchanted. This incomparable person, wishing to show in her turn what she could do, took a lute and, having tuned it, she played in an enchanting fashion. Then, having had a harp brought, she played in the first manner; then they brought her a viola, this she played in the second manner; after that she took a sweet flute, and played in the third manner. In a word, she used the twelve methods one after the other, and the twenty-four branches of music.

She also sang, and her voice gave no less pleasure to the amorous Couloufe than the manner in which she had played the instrument.

He was so charmed by it that, being unable any longer to restrain himself, 'My queen,' he cried, 'you have deprived me of reason. I cannot resist the transports that you have inspired in me. Permit me to kiss one of your beautiful hands and to lay my head at your feet.'

Thus saying, this impassioned lover threw

himself to the ground like a madman, and seizing one of the lady's hands, he kissed it very warmly.

But the fair lady, pained at his boldness, repulsed him proudly and said to him : 'Whoever you may be, pause and do not overstep the limits of modesty ; I am a maiden of quality. It is useless for you to desire my love ; you will not gain it ; you will see me no more.'

At these words she retired, and all the other ladies at her example did the same.

The son of Abdallah, in despair at having acted so disagreeably towards the woman he loved, remained in the hall agitated by a thousand different thoughts.

The old woman who had brought him thither came to him.

'What have you done, young man ?' she said to him. 'Why have you let yourself be carried away by your passion ? Although I had made you aware that I have here slaves of every nation, you ought to have judged by the magnificence of this mansion and the manner in which you have been received here, that you were not at a slave-merchant's. The lady whom you have offended is the daughter of

one of the first people of the court. You ought to have been more respectful.'

The speech of the old woman augmented the love of Couloufe and the regret which he experienced at having by an indiscreet outburst obliged the lady to retire.

He was quite mortified by it and despaired of seeing her again. Suddenly she returned to the room with the other ladies, all adorned with other and fairer garments. She began to laugh when she saw the son of Abdallah sad and dreamy.

'I believe,' she said, 'that you repent of your fault, and I willingly pardon you on condition that you will be better behaved for the future, and tell me who you are.'

As he asked nothing better than to reconcile himself with this charming person, he told her with alacrity that his name was Couloufe, and that he was the king's favourite.

'My lord,' she then said, 'I have long known you by reputation and heard you very advantageously spoken of. I have even sometimes wished to see you. I am delighted to have this satisfaction to-day. Continue our dancing, and our

music,' she continued, turning towards the other women; 'let us make every effort to divert our guest.'

All the ladies recommenced to dance and to play instruments, and this entertainment lasted till night time.

As soon as night came on a prodigious quantity of candles were lit, and whilst waiting for supper the young dame and the son of Abdallah had much speech together. She asked him news of the King Mirgchan; whether this prince had beautiful people in his seraglio?

'Yes, madam,' said Couloufe; 'he has some rather beautiful slaves. He loves at present one named Ghulendam. She is young, well-made, and I should have said she was the most beautiful girl in the world if I had not seen you; but your charms surpass hers, and she is not worthy to be compared to you.'

These flattering words did not displease Dilara or Heart's Repose, as the young lady was called. She was the daughter of Boyruc, a great Tartar lord, who was not then at Caracoram. Mirgehan had sent him to Samarcand to congratulate Usbec-Kan on his behalf on his accession to the throne.

Dilara during the absence of her father sometimes took pleasure in attracting young men to her house merely for her amusement ; for as soon as they wished to express love for her, she well knew how to repress their transports.

She was very pleased to hear Couloufe say that she was more beautiful than the king's slave. That made her vainer and gayer. She said a thousand delightful things during supper, and by her wit ended by inspiring in her guest all the love of which he was capable. He did not fail in his turn to shine during the repast. Excited by the sight and animation of the young lady, from time to time very pleasing sallies escaped him. When it was time to retire he prostrated himself before Dilara and said to her :

' Were I to live here a hundred years, I should always feel I had been with you only a moment, but great as is the pleasure I take in your society, I must retire and leave you to rest. To-morrow, if you will permit me, I will return.'

' I consent,' replied the lady ; ' you have only to be in the evening at the door of the mosque whence you were fetched to-day, and you will be brought back to this house.'

As she said these words, a slave brought to her a purse of gold and silken threads which was the work of her hands, and in which were jewels of considerable value.

'Here, Coulouse,' she said, 'do not refuse this little present, or you will see me no more.'

The son of Abdallah took the purse, thanked the lady, and left the room. He met the good old woman in the courtyard, she opened the street door and showed him the road to the palace.

As soon as he had arrived thither, he retired to his apartment and went to bed. He passed the rest of the night in recalling to his memory all that he had seen during the day. He was so occupied with Dilara that he could not close his eyes. He rose early and betook himself to the king. This prince, who had not seen him the preceding day, and who had several times asked for him, was much pained.

'Where do you come from, Coulouse?' said he as soon as he saw him. 'What were you doing yesterday? Why did you not appear?'

'My lord,' replied the favourite, 'when your majesty knows the adventure that has befallen

me, you will not be surprised at not having seen me.'

At the same time he related all that had passed. When he had finished his story :

'Is it possible?' said Mirgehan, 'that this young lady of whom you tell me, is as beautiful as you say? You speak of her with such animation that I am doubtful about the portrait you draw of her.'

'My lord,' replied the son of Abdallah, 'so far from being a flattering painter, I can assure you that she is still far above what I have said. Yes, if the most famous Chinese painter undertook to paint her, he would fear, with reason, not to be able to equal nature.'

'That is too much,' said the king; 'you make me anxious to see this lady, and I wish absolutely to accompany you presently, since you are to return to her.'

The curiosity of the young king gravely afflicted Couloufe. He was apprehensive of the consequences to his love.

'What shall I do, my lord?' he said, 'to introduce you into this lady's house? Who shall I tell her you are?'

'I will disguise myself,' replied Mirgehan, 'and I will pass as your slave. I will enter with you and will hide myself in a corner, where I shall observe everything.'

The son of Abdallah did not dare reply to his master, who dressed himself as a slave, and at fall of night they both betook themselves to the gate of the mosque. They were not long there before seeing the old woman appear, she said to Couloufe :

'There was no need to bring this slave with you. You have only to send him back.'

The king was mortified to hear the old woman speak thus, but Couloufe said :

'My good mother, permit, I beg you, this slave to follow us. He is an intelligent fellow and has agreeable talents. He makes impromptu verses and sings delightfully. Your mistress will not be angry at my showing him to her.'

The old woman said nothing further. They set forth all three, Couloufe clothed in a woman's over-garment as on the preceding day, and Mirgehan in a slave's dress. They entered the courtyard, and from there into the room, which they found lit with an infinity of perfumed candles, which gave out agreeable odours.

Dilara asked the son of Abdallah why he had a slave accompanying him.

'Madam,' he said, 'I thought to bring him for your amusement. He is a buffoon, poet, and musician.'

'That being so,' she said, 'he is welcome. But, my friend,' she added, addressing the king, 'don't show lack of respect to my women, for you might repent it.'

The prince, seeing himself obliged to play the buffoon, began to joke, and acquitted himself so well that the lady said to the favourite :

'Truly, Couloufe, you have in him a very agreeable and witty fellow. I even notice in his manners something noble and gallant. He must act as cup-bearer to us this evening. I feel well-inclined towards him.'

'Since he has the happiness to please you,' replied the favourite, 'he is mine no longer; he is yours, madam.'

'Catalpan,' he said to the king, 'I am no longer your master ; this is your mistress.'

At these words the prince approached the lady, kissed her hand and said to her :

'Madam, I am now your slave, and I feel

myself already disposcd to serve you with much zeal.'

She accepted Mirghan as a slave.

' My lord,' she said to Couloufe, ' I look upon that fellow as a creature of mine ; but have the goodness to keep him for me. He will live with you, and you will bring him to me each time you come here. I cannot keep him in my house, because it is known that he is your slave. Everyone knows him as that. If he were seen to pass from your service to mine, people might gossip, and I have to take great precautions.'

After conversing for some time, Couloufe and Dilara sat down to table to sup and the king stood before them. As this prince diverted the lady by a thousand pleasantries, she said to the favourite :

' My lord, permit this fellow to eat and drink with us.'

' Madam,' replied Couloufe, ' he does not generally eat with me.'

' Do not be so severe,' replied the lady ; ' let us drink together, that he may love us the more.'

' Sit down there, Catalpan,' said the son of Abdallah, ' since the lady insists.'

The sham slave did not require to be told

twice. He sat between Couloufe and the amiable daughter of Boyruc. He ate, and when wine had been brought, the lady filled a cup to the brim and presenting it to him said : ‘Here, Catalpan, drink this to my health.’

He took the cup, after having kissed the hand which gave it him, and he drank. After that wine was poured out all round and the beautiful Dilara, by her example, incited her guests to enjoy themselves. She stretched out a golden cup quite full, and addressing the son of Abdallah :

‘Couloufe,’ she said, ‘I drink to your infatuation, to the charming Ghulendam, the king’s favourite.’

‘Madam,’ replied the favourite blushing, ‘please God I may never have the audacity to lift my thoughts to the beloved of my prince. I have too much respect for him.’

‘Ah! you wish to play at discretion,’ interrupted the lady laughing. ‘I remember you were speaking to me yesterday of Ghulendam in such an animated manner that you seemed to me to be charmed with her. I am sure you love her. Admit to us frankly that you are not displeasing

to her, and that sometimes you give utterance to your love.'

Couloufe was very much alarmed at these words, of which he foresaw the consequences.

'Pray, madam,' he said, 'cease joking on this subject. I have never had a secret meeting with this lady.'

The trouble he evinced redoubled Dilara's cries. Instead of looking serious, she said: 'You ought to relate your adventures to us. Catalpan,' she said, looking at the would-be slave, 'tell your master to have more confidence in me.'

'Come, my lord Couloufe,' said the king, 'give madam the satisfaction she asks. She asks you so graciously. Relate to her the birth and growth of your love. Tell her how far you have got with Ghulendam, and how you both deceive the king. Madam,' he added, turning towards Dilara, 'I am not less curious than yourself to know that, for although I pique myself on being a rather discreet confidant, I assure you that the lord Couloufe has made a mystery to me of his passion for the favourite.'

Mirgehan by this speech succeeded in disconcerting his friend, who perceived that Dilara's

pleasantrics had not failed to make a bad impression on the mind of the prince. However, they all three drank, and insensibly the king, heated by the wine, forgot the part he had resolved to play.

'Fair princess,' he said to the lady, 'sing me, I beg you, something pleasant. They say that you sing charmingly.'

These words, although spoken in a very familiar way, did not at all displease the daughter of Boyruc. Instead of being offended, she burst out laughing.

'Very willingly,' she said, 'my dear Catalpan ; there is nothing that I will not do for you.'

She immediately ordered a well-tuned lute, and sang a very beautiful air in the Persian manner, which she accompanied with the instrument. Then, taking a tambourine, she sang another air in the Arabian manner.

The king, who had never heard such good singing nor such excellent playing on the lute and tambourine, was transported with pleasure, and, forgetting that he wished to pass for a slave, 'You enchant me, madam,' he cried ; 'however attractive a picture Couloufe may have given of you, he has not said enough about you.'

The son of Abdallah made signs to him to stop in vain : there was no means of doing so.

'No,' pursued the prince, 'Isaac Mouseli, my musician, whose voice is so much praised, does not sing as agreeably as you.'

Dilara, recognising by these words that the man whom she took for a slave was the king himself, rose abruptly and ran to fetch a veil to cover her face.

'Ah, we are lost!' she said low to her women. 'It is not a slave who came here with Couloufe, it is the king!'

After having said that, she returned to find Mirgehan, and did not dare sit down before him.

'Sit down, madam,' said the prince ; 'it is for me to stand in your presence. Am I not your slave? I should not have sat down at all, if, as my sovereign mistress, you had not ordered me to do so.'

The daughter of Boyruc began to weep at these words.

'Ah! great monarch,' she said, throwing herself at his feet, 'I humbly beg your majesty to have pity on me. I am an inexperienced maiden. You have witnessed my fault; deign, I pray you, to pardon it.'

The king raised the lady, consoled her, told her to fear nothing, and asked her who she was. She satisfied his curiosity, after which he left the house with Couloufe, and regained the palace.

The pleasantries which Dilara had indulged in with Couloufe about Ghulendam were productive of sad results. Mirgehan suspected his favourite and the son of Abdallah of loving one another, and he thought that without regard to their duty, they dared in his very palace to confess their love.

By having them both closely watched he would soon have been persuaded of the falseness of his suspicions, but he was one of those jealous persons who only listen to their jealousy, and who, yielding to the first impression given them, think it unnecessary to be further enlightened.

For this reason, the very next day, without seeking to verify his conjectures, he sent to tell Couloufe that he forbade him to appear henceforth before him, and that he wished him to leave Caracoram that very day.

The favourite, although he was conscious of the cause of his disgrace, having nothing to reproach himself with, did not despair of attesting

his innocence if he could succeed in getting a hearing. He neglected, however, to seek means to justify himself. He yielded with a good grace to his misfortune. He obeyed the king's order, and joining a great caravan which was going to China, he went with it to Samarcand. As no one knew better than he how to resist misfortune, he was not overwhelmed by this fresh blow. Since he had already found himself in a miserable situation, all accidents of life appearing inevitable to him, as has already been said, nothing could bend the strength of his spirit.

He lived in Samarcand, giving himself up to everything heaven had demanded of him. He lived well, and amused himself so long as he had money.

When he had none left he went and placed himself at the corner of a mosque. The ministers interrogated him on his religion, and finding him very learned, they gave him a daily alms of two loaves and a jug of water, with which he lived very contentedly. Now, it happened one day that a great merchant called Mouzaffer came to pray in this mosque. He cast his eyes on Couloufe and called him.

'Young man,' he said, 'whence are you, and what chance brings you to this town?'

'My lord,' replied the son of Abdallah, 'I am the child of a Damascus family. I had the wish to travel. I came to Tartary, and some miles from Samarcand I met some robbers, who killed my servants and robbed me.'

Mouzaffer, having listened to Couloufe, believed him, and said to him: 'Do not distress yourself, good fortune is linked to bad, you may find here means of consolation; get up and follow me to my house.'

The son of Abdallah did as he was told, and when he got to the merchant's house he judged Mouzaffer to be a very rich man. A shop full of rich stuffs, precious furniture, and the very large number of servants he saw, caused him to form this opinion. And he was not wrong, Mouzaffer had considerable wealth.

This merchant made Couloufe sit beside him at table and first offered him some sherbet. Then cakes and very savoury meats were presented to them. After the dinner they conversed together, and Mouzaffer then dismissed him with some presents.

The following day the merchant returned to the same mosque. He took the son of Abdallah, conducted him to his house, and regaled him as on the preceding day.

There was there a doctor named Danischemend, who, taking Couloufe aside after the repast, spoke to him thus :

'Young stranger, the lord Mouzaffer, the master of this house, has a plan for you, a plan which demands prompt execution and which ought to please you in the present condition of your affairs. You know that he has an only son named Taher, who is a young man of a very violent disposition. This Taher has recently married the daughter of a great foreign lord. The husband, in his usual impetuous manner, has offended his wife. She has retaliated by words full of contempt and pride. This has so irritated Taher that he has repudiated her. He repented a moment after, for she is a very beautiful person and he loves her passionately; but the laws do not permit of his taking her back until another man has first married and repudiated her. That is why Mouzaffer hopes you will marry her this very day, according to the law of Islam, and repudiate her to-morrow. He will give

you fifty gold sequins. Will you not do this for him ?'

'Very willingly,' replied Couloufe. 'I am quite disposed to render him this service. He has received me too well for me to refuse to do anything he wishes ; and, moreover, I feel no repugnance for what he proposes to me.'

'I quite believe it,' replied Danischemend. 'There are in this town a great many men who would ask nothing better than to be chosen on this occasion. Are there not fifty gold sequins to be gained ? The wife of Taher is of perfect beauty. Her body is straighter than a cypress ; she has a round face, well separated and arched eyebrows, and her glances are so many poisoned arrows. The snow is not whiter than her complexion, and her little crimson mouth resembles a rosebud. Therefore as many friends could be found in Samarcand,' continued Danischemend, 'as one wished ; but it is preferable that he should be a stranger, because those sort of things should be done as secretly as possible. Mouzaffer has cast his eyes on you. I am the lieutenant of the cadi, and consequently vested with power to marry you to this charming lady this com-

bination of all perfections ; and, if you wish, from this very moment you shall be the possessor of the fifty sequins.'

'I consent,' replied the son of Abdallah. After the portrait you have just drawn of her, you may well think that I wish I had already met her.'

'Yes, but,' said Danischemend, 'you must promise to repudiate her at once, and to leave Samarcand instantly with the money which will be given you. The family of the lord Mouzaffer will not be pleased for you to remain in this town after this adventure.'

'I will not stay long,' replied Couloufe, 'and if promising is not enough, I swear that to-morrow I will repudiate the lady you have made me marry.'

He had no sooner taken this oath than the lieutenant of the cadi informed Mouzaffer that the young stranger was ready to serve his wishes. 'He accepts,' he said, 'the conditions which I proposed to him on your behalf. He has only to be married now to your daughter-in-law.'

Mouzaffer sent for his son and the rest of the family immediately, and in their presence

Danischemend married Couloufe without letting him see the lady, because Taher wished it thus. He was even resolved that Couloufe should pass the night without light, so that the following day, not having seen her, it would be less difficult to repudiate her.

However, the night having come, Couloufe was introduced into a chamber, where he was left without light with the lady, who was lying on a couch of gold brocade. He doubly locked the door, felt for the couch, and having found it, he seated himself beside his wife. It is easy to believe that she was not asleep; it was not without emotion that she saw herself given up to the society of a man whose face was hidden from her, and of whom she had drawn a disagreeable picture to herself, because she was not ignorant that the first wretched creatures which chance offered were ordinarily taken on such occasions.

On the other hand, Couloufe, although Danischemend had extolled to him the beauty of the lady, was very mortified at not having the pleasure of seeing her; or rather the portrait which had been drawn of her, inspired in him an

eager curiosity to verify it. This desire, which consumed him, and which he could not satisfy, diminished his pleasure in the thought of his fifty sequins.

'Madam,' he said, 'favourable as is this night for me, I cannot taste a perfect joy. Every minute redoubles the desire that I have to see your face. I have formed such a beautiful idea of it, and I wish so ardently to contemplate it, that I do not know whether it is not as great a trouble to be with you without seeing you, as to see you without speaking to you. However, I must give you up to-morrow. Oh, since our acquaintance was to be so short lived, at least I ought to have been aware of all its value.'

After having said these words, he was silent to hear what the lady would reply; and he was rather surprised when, instead of replying to the speech, she said :

'O you whom Taher has chosen to re-establish the union which his violent temper has destroyed, whoever you may be, inform me who you are. It seems to me that the sound of your voice is not unknown to me. I cannot listen to you calmly.'

Couloufe trembled at these words.

'Madam,' he replied, 'tell me yourself what your family is? The sound of your voice also troubles my senses. I seem to hear a young Tartar lady whom I know. Great God, could it be But no,' he said, restraining himself, 'it cannot be that you are the daughter of Boyruc?'

'Ah! Couloufe,' cried the lady, 'is it you who speak to me?'

'Yes, my queen,' he said, 'it is Couloufe himself, who can hardly believe it is Dilara whom he hears.'

'Be persuaded of it,' she replied. 'I am that unhappy Dilara who received you in her house with the King Mirgehan, who by her indiscreet remarks made you an object of suspicion to this prince, and whom you ought to regard as your greatest enemy, since she is the cause of your disgrace.'

'Cease, madam,' replied the son of Abdallah, 'cease to impute it to yourself. Heaven wished it thus, and far from accusing it of rigour, I give thanks to its kindness for having made such an agreeable chance succeed my misfortune.'

But, beautiful Dilara,' he continued, 'how did the daughter of Boyruc become the wife of Taher?'

'I am going,' she said, 'to tell you. My father, during his embassy to Samarcand, lodged with Mouzaffer, whom he had known a long time. They arranged this marriage between them, and Boyruc, having returned to Caracoram, sent me well-accompanied to Samarcand. I obeyed my father with a repugnance of which you can have little idea; for I will admit, my dear Couloufe, that I loved you, although I had not shown it you, and I call Heaven to bear witness that your disgrace cost me many tears. My marriage with Taher did not banish you from my memory. This brutal husband, who is, moreover, little agreeable in person, instead of effacing you, only kept your image there. And as if I had foreseen that love or fortune would bring us together, I have always preserved the hope of seeing you again. But my happiness surpasses my expectation, since I find my lover in the husband given me. O marvellous adventure! I can hardly believe it.'

Couloufe, after what he had just heard, could no

longer doubt that he was with the daughter of Boyruc.

'Beautiful Dilara,' he cried, transported with love and joy, 'what a happy change ! By what strange series of adventures have I attained to the summit of my wishes ! What ! is it you, whom they have made me marry ? You, whose charming image is engraved on my heart ! You, whom I thought never to see again ! Ah ! princess, if you have indeed pitied the son of Abdallah, if my disgrace has cost you tears, share now the sweetness of the transports inspired by my happiness. Who could have told me when the king banished me from his court that Heaven only sent me this misfortune to make me the happiest of men.'

Dilara was not insensible to the tender declarations of Couloufe. They both passed the night in mutual testimony of the pleasure they had in meeting each other again, and they were still giving assurances of it when a slave of Mouzaffer came and knocked somewhat roughly at the door of their room, crying at the pitch of his voice :

'Hola, my lord ! Take, if you please, the trouble to come forth ; it is daylight.'

The son of Abdallah did not reply to the voice of the slave, but continued to speak with the daughter of Boyruc. But he felt his joy fade away; a mortal sadness succeeded suddenly the sweet transports which agitated him.

'My queen,' he said, 'have I heard him aright? They want to separate us already. Mouzaffer, impatient to see you enter his family again, counts the moments of the divorce which has severed you from it; and his son, justly jealous of my happiness, cannot endure its duration; daylight itself, in accord with our enemies, seems to have precipitated its return. Hardly, alas! have I found you again, than I must lose you again in spite of the bonds which unite us, for I have promised, I have sworn to repudiate you.'

'And you could keep this terrible oath?' interrupted the lady. 'Did you know when you made it that it was me you promised to renounce? You are not at all obliged to keep a rash promise, and were it otherwise, is not Dilara worth a broken oath? Ah! Couloufe,' she added weeping, 'you do not love me if you are capable of wavering between possessing me and the vain

honour of keeping a word which shocks love and reason.'

'But, madam,' he replied, 'does it depend on me to keep you for myself? Even were I to violate my oath, do you suppose a stranger, without help, without wealth, can resist Mouzaffer?'

'Yes,' replied the daughter of Boyruc, 'you can: despise his threats, reject his offers, the law is on your side. If you have firmness you will render futile all the efforts that will be made to disunite us.'

'Well, my princess,' he said, carried away by his passion, 'you shall be satisfied. My oath, indeed, was rash, and I feel I cannot keep it without its costing me the peace of my life. It is settled, I will not repudiate you since I can prevent it. It is the resolution which I take. I defy Mouzaffer and all the world to turn me from it.'

Whilst he was assuring his wife, and was promising himself to remain firm in his intention, Taher, to whom the night had appeared much longer than to them, also came to knock at the door of their room.

'Now then, friend,' he cried, 'the day advances.

You have already been told to come forth ; you require much urging. We have waited a long time to thank you and give you the promised sum. Dress quickly that we may finish this business ; the lieutenant of the cadi will be here in a moment.'

Couloufe rose immediately, reclothed himself, and opened the door to Taher, who had him conducted to the bath and served by a Greek slave. When the son of Abdallah had left the bath, the slave gave him some beautiful linen and a very clean robe, and then led him into a room where Mouzaffer was, with his son and Danischemend. They saluted Couloufe, who made them a profound reverence. They insisted on his seating himself beside them at table, and they were served with many dishes.

After the repast Danischemend took Couloufe aside, and presented him with fifty gold sequins, and with a magnificent turban enclosed in a parcel.

'Here, young man,' he said, 'is what the lord Mouzaffer gives you ; he thanks you for the pleasure you have given him, and he begs you not to remain longer at Samarcand. Repudiate

your wife, leave the town, and if anyone asks you aught concerning this matter answer naught.

Danischemend imagined that Couloufe, touched by the kindness of Mouzaffer, was going to indulge in speeches full of gratitude, and he was very surprised at his answer.

'I thought,' said Couloufe, throwing far from him the parcel and the sequins, 'that justice, good faith, and religion reigned in Samarcand, especially since Usbec Kan came to Tartary, but I perceive that I am mistaken, or rather that the king is deceived. He does not know that in the very town where he is staying they tyrannise over strangers. What! I arrive at Samarcand, a merchant addresses himself to me, invites me to dinner at his house, caresses me, makes me marry a lady according to the laws, I undertake it with the best faith in the world, and when I have undertaken it I am called upon to repudiate my wife! Cease, my lord, cease to propose an action to me so unworthy of an honest man, or I shall put earth on my head in public mark of extreme grief. I shall go and throw myself at the feet of Usbec-Kan, and we will see what he will command.'

The lieutenant of the cadi, at these words, took Mouzaffer aside, and said to him : ' You wished to take this stranger as an intermediary ; you could not have made a worse choice. He refuses to repudiate his wife, but I see he is a man who is not easily satisfied, and who wishes to oblige you to make him a considerable present.'

' Oh ! if it is only that,' said Mouzaffer, ' he shall soon be content. Offer him a hundred gold sequins, and let him leave the town with all the speed and all the secrecy which I exact from him.'

' No, no, lord Mouzaffer,' cried Couloufe, hearing him speak thus, ' you may double the sum in vain, you may give me ten thousand sequins, you may add to it in vain all the richest stuffs in your shops, I shall not break such a sacred engagement.'

' Young man,' said Danischemend then to him, ' you are not acting in good part in this affair. I advise you to take the hundred gold sequins and to repudiate your wife without delay, for if you reduce us to the necessity of making this affair public, you will repent it, on my word.'

' Your threats,' replied the son of Abdallah, ' do not alarm me. You cannot oblige me to destroy a union which the laws protect.'

'Ah! this is too much,' interrupted at this juncture the impetuous Taher, who had had much difficulty in restraining himself and remaining silent till then; 'let us take this miserable fellow to the cadi, and let us have him treated as he deserves. We will see whether honest people are to be abused by vain promises.'

Danischemend and Mouzaffer still tried to persuade Couloufe that he ought to do with a good grace what they wished, but not being successful, they led him before the cadi. They informed this judge of all that had passed, and on their report the cadi, looking at Couloufe, spoke to him thus:

'Young stranger, whom no one knows in this town, and who lived in a mosque on the alms which our ministers gave you every day, have you lost your judgment so far as to imagine that you will remain in tranquil marriage with a lady who has been the wife of Taher? The son of the richest merchant of Samarcand is to see a wife whom he loves and whom he wishes to take back in the arms of a wretch, whose low birth is perhaps his least fault! Reflect and consider. You are not in a position of equality with your wife, and

were you even of higher rank than Taher, it is enough that you are not in a state to bear the expenses suitable to a respectable family for me to withhold you permission to live with your wife. Renounce therefore the foolish hope which you have conceived, and which has made you violate an oath. Accept the offer of the lord Mouzaffer, repudiate your wife and return to your country, or if you persist in not wishing to consent, prepare to receive directly a hundred blows with a stick.'

The speech of the cadi, although spoken with a judicial voice, had not the power to shake the firmness of the son of Abdallah, who received the hundred blows bravely, and without giving way.

'That is enough for to-day,' said the cadi. 'To-morrow we will double the dose, and if it is not strong enough to cure him of his obstinacy, we will have recourse to more violent remedies. Let him pass this night with his wife. I hope we shall see him more reasonable to-morrow.'

Taher would have wished that, without waiting for the following day, they had continued to strike Couloufe, and had it depended on him, it would have been done, but the cadi did not wish it, so that Mouzaffer and his son returned home with

Couloufe, who, all broken as he was by the blows he had received, did not fail to look upon the liberty given him to see Dilara again as a sweet panacea for his pains.

Mouzaffer tried to persuade the son of Abdallah with gentleness. He made him fresh promises, he offered him three hundred gold sequins if he would immediately repudiate the daughter of Boyruc, and whilst he spared nothing to win him over, Taher entered the lady's apartment.

She was in a state of inexpressible agitation. Impatient to learn what had passed at the cadi's, she awaited Couloufe with all possible anxiety. Although assured of his love, she feared lest his firmness had given way, and she could not help believing it when she saw her first husband appear. She thought, on seeing him, that he had come to announce to her this terrible news. Her face grew deadly pale, and she all but fell in a swoon.

Taher was deceived by these signs of grief. He thought someone had already told the lady that Couloufe refused to repudiate her, and that this refusal was the cause of the profound affliction with which she appeared seized.

'Madam,' he said to her, 'do not abandon your-

self to your sadness. It is not yet time to despair. The wretch whom I chose as intermediary does not indeed wish to return you to my love, but don't let that distress you. He has already received a hundred blows, and to-morrow he will have many more if he persists in not doing what he agreed with us to do. The cadi has even resolved to make him suffer extreme tortures. Console yourself, then, my sultana, you have only this night to pass with the fellow ; from to-morrow I shall become your husband again. I come to reassure you myself, and to exhort you to be patient, for I do not doubt that the necessity for enduring that creature is a great mortification for you.'

'Yes, my lord,' interrupted Dilara, 'I admit to you that I am sorely troubled on account of the man. The peace of my life depends on him ; alas, I fear this affair will not turn out as I wish.'

'Pardon me, my queen,' he rejoined with alacrity ; 'calm an anxiety so flattering to Taher. You may flatter yourself that our union will be re-established to-morrow.'

Thus saying, he left the lady's apartment, and Coulouffe entered it a moment after.

As soon as she saw the son of Abdallah, she passed from grief to joy.

'Ah! dear spouse,' she cried, offering him her arm, 'come and receive the reward of your constancy. Is it possible that you have rather suffered an ignominious treatment than renounce Dilara? Taher himself has told me everything that happened to you at the cadi's, and if I am charmed with your firmness, I also feel very keenly the barbarity which has been practised on you. I cannot, without alarm, think of the new torments which threaten you.'

'Madam,' replied Couloufe, 'whatever tortures may be prepared for me, my constancy shall not be shaken; they will produce no more effect than the promises which Mouzaffer has just made me, they can neither seduce nor terrify me. I do not know what fate the arbiter of our destinies has in store for me, I do not know whether he wishes me to die or to live for you, but at least I know well that it is not written in the sacred tables of the sky, where the inevitable destination of all things is inscribed, that I shall repudiate you.'

'No,' replied the daughter of Boyruc, 'Heaven has not united us in such a marvellous manner in

order to separate us almost immediately. I cannot believe that it will let you perish, and I feel that I am inspired by it with a means of deceiving our enemies.'

'Have you told the cadi,' she added, 'that you have been the favourite of the King Mirgehan?'

'No,' replied Couloufe, 'for the judge closed my mouth at once by saying that he would never allow me to wed you since I was without means, even were I well born.'

'That being so,' she said, 'follow exactly the advice which I am going to give you. Tomorrow, when you are before the cadi, do not fail to say that you are the son of Massaoud. He is a merchant of Khokand, who has immense wealth. You have only to maintain that he is your father. Say boldly even that you will soon receive news from him which will make known to everyone that you say nothing that is not true.'

Couloufe promised Dilara to employ this falsehood, to avoid, if possible, the tortures prepared for him, and the hope which they both conceived that by this means they would compel the cadi to let them live together, made them more tranquil.

They both yielded insensibly to their hopes, and, turning their thoughts from future troubles, they gave themselves up to the pleasure of the moment. They passed the rest of the day and all the night in delightful conversation ; but very soon daylight came to disturb their joy.

The cadi's people, led by Taher, arrived at the door of the room. They knocked loudly, crying :

'Come forth, stranger ! It is time to appear before the judge ; come forth.'

The son of Abdallah sighed deeply at these words, and his wife began to cry.

'Unfortunate Couloufe,' she said, 'how dear your spouse costs you !'

'My princess,' he replied, 'pray dry your tears. They pierce my heart. Do not let us give way to despair ; let us rather revive our hope ; let us await everything from Heaven ; I flatter myself that it will succour me ; I even feel already an effect of its kindness—my courage redoubles, and there is no danger that can make me tremble.'

Thus saying, he opened the door, and followed the cadi's people, who led him to their master.

Mouzaffer and his son accompanied them, and appeared full of uneasiness.

As soon as the judge saw Couloufe : 'Well, friend !' he said, 'what disposition are you in to-day ? Are you not more prudent than yesterday ? Must you have fresh blows to make you repudiate your wife ? I do not think so ; you have doubtless made salutary reflections and thought that a nobody, like you, ought not to persist in wishing to preserve a wife who cannot be his.'

' My lord,' said Couloufe, 'may the life of such a judge as yourself endure several centuries, but I am not a nobody. My birth is not at all obscure, as you imagine, and since I must at last make myself known, know that my name is Rukneddin, and that I am the only son of a merchant of Khokand, named Massaoud. My father is richer than Mouzaffer, and did he know the state that I am in, he would soon send me so many camels laden with gold that all the women of Samarcand would envy the happiness of her whom I have married. What ! because robbers have despoiled me near this town, and I retired to a mosque to subsist, you conclude from that that I am a nobody !'

I will show you that you are mistaken. I am going to write to my father this moment, and he will no sooner have received news of me, than he will make me the possessor of infinite riches in this town.'

As soon as Couloufe had said these words, the cadi said to him: 'You are the only son of a rich merchant of Khokand, and it is only owing to the accident you have just related that you are in want ?'

'Assuredly,' replied the son of Abdallah. 'You see, my lord, that I am not a wretch brought up in the gutter.'

'Why, young man,' replied the judge, 'did you not declare that yesterday? I should not have had you ill-treated. My lord,' he added, turning to Mouzaffer, 'what the stranger says changes the aspect of affairs. Being the only son of a great merchant, the laws do not permit of forcing him to repudiate his wife.'

'Good my lord cadi,' interrupted Taher, 'do you put faith in this impostor? He calls himself the son of Massaoud, to avoid the blows and gain time.'

'I do not know what to do,' said the judge.

'Whether he lies, or whether he tells the truth, I am forbidden to take further steps. All that I can do most favourable for you is to enjoin the stranger to prove what he advances.'

'We do not ask better,' then said Mouzaffer. 'I wish even that an envoy be sent at my expense to Khokand ; I know Massaoud from having seen him here sometimes ; I know that he is a very rich merchant ; if the stranger is really his son we will give Dilara up to him.'

'Yes,' said Taher, 'but whilst waiting the return of the courier, it would be well, it seems to me, to make the couple live apart.'

'That is against the law,' replied the cadi. 'The wife ought to live with her husband ; she cannot be taken from him without doing violence which the law condemns. Send therefore a man to Khokand, which is only seven days from here. In a fortnight we shall know what to think of the stranger. If he is the son of Massaoud, he shall not repudiate the lady ; but I swear by the black stone of the sacred temple of Mecca and by the holy thicket of Medina, in which is the tomb of the Prophet, that if he deceives us a cruel and ignominious torture shall be the punish-

ment of the impostor and shall terminate his life.'

This affair decided thus by the cadi, the parties retired. Mouzaffer and his son sent one of their servants to Khokand with the order to get the information they required, and to make all possible haste.

As for Couloufe, he went promptly to give an account to the lady of all that had passed at the judge's. She was greatly rejoiced.

'Ah! dear husband,' she said, 'all goes well. We need apprehend nothing further. Before the courier has returned from Khokand, even before he has arrived there, we will both take flight. We will leave Samarcand one night, we will betake ourselves to Bokhara as soon as possible, and we will live there on my dowry in peace which our enemies will not be able to disturb.'

Couloufe approved of Dilara's idea. They resolved to take flight; but they were too closely observed in the house where they lived to be able to carry out their plan with impunity. They thought they had better go and lodge elsewhere, that they must tell this to Mouzaffer, and that if

he offered any opposition they would ask permission of the cadi. That being decided between them, the son of Abdallah went immediately to find Mouzaffer and his son. He told them he wished that very day to change his abode ; that since the laws made him the master of his wife he proposed to do with her and take her where he wished. Mouzaffer and his son did not fail to oppose this plan ; Taher especially protested that he would not allow Dilara to leave his house. Couloufe on his side did not give way, so that it was necessary to have recourse to the cadi.

This judge, informed as to what brought them before him, asked Couloufe why he wished to leave the house of Mouzaffer.

' My lord,' replied the son of Abdallah, ' I have often heard Massaoud, my father, say that when one lives with one's enemies, one ought to separate from them as soon as possible ; so I wish to go and live elsewhere whilst waiting for news from Khokand. My wife wishes it as much as I do.'

' Ah ! the liar !' cried Taher at this juncture ; ' Dilara laments, Dilara is in tears because this

wretch is her husband, and he has the impudence to say she is wearied in my house !'

'Yes, I said it,' replied Couloufe, 'and I say it again ; my wife loves me and desires nothing more ardently than to get away from you. If that is not true, if she has other sentiments, I am ready to repudiate her at once.'

'Lord cadi,' said Taher, 'you hear him, I take him at his word ; order Dilara to come here and let her explain herself.'

'I consent,' said the judge. 'Go,' he added, turning towards Danischemend, who was present ; 'go to Mouzaffer and tell Dilara that I wish to speak to her ; bring her here immediately. We shall soon see in what disposition she is, and I declare that if she gives the stranger the lie, she shall be repudiated instantly.'

Danischemend discharged his errand with much speed ; he brought the lady to the judge, who no sooner saw her appear than he asked her if she wished to leave Mouzaffer, and if she had more inclination for her husband than for Taher. Taher did not doubt but that she would pronounce in his favour ; and yielding to a joyful impulse

which he could not control, he spoke before she could reply.

'Speak, madam,' he said ; 'you have only to declare your real sentiments and you shall be delivered this very day from what you hate.'

'Since this assurance is given me,' said the daughter of Boyruc, 'I shall disguise nothing from you. My second husband, the son of Massaoud, has all my affection, and I very humbly beg the lord cadi to give us permission to lodge elsewhere than at Mouzaffer's.'

'Oh, oh !' then said the judge, addressing the first husband, 'you see the stranger has not advanced anything with temerity ; he was very sure of the fact.'

'Ah ! the traitress !' cried Taher, quite stunned by the sincere avowal of the lady ; 'how can she have let herself be won over since yesterday ?'

'I am sorry, for your sake,' replied the cadi, 'for I cannot help allowing them to go and lodge where they please.'

'So you will let this stranger triumph,' said Taher to him, 'and without knowing whether he is really the son of Massaoud, you will allow him the tranquil possession of Dilara ?'

'No,' replied the judge; 'if what he says is not the case, if he is a wretch, I shall have him put to death for having deceived us.'

'And you imagine,' replied the son of Mouzaffer, 'that if he has cause to fear the punishment with which you threaten him, he will be fool enough to wait in this town till we have received news from Khokand? What an error! Be rather persuaded that he has the intention to leave Samarcand, and that he will perhaps induce the lady to follow him, and they doubtless wish to change their residence in order to easily carry out their resolution.'

'That is not impossible,' replied the cadi, 'but I shall see to that. In whatever part of the town they lodge, I undertake to have them watched by a numerous and vigilant guard who will report to me.'

Coulouse and Dilara were therefore at liberty to leave Mouzaffer's house. They left it that very day to go and stay in a caravanserai. They bought some slaves to wait on them. They did not lack money, for the lady had a considerable portion, with a somewhat large quantity of precious stones. They only thought at first of enjoying themselves.

The pleasure of being able to abandon themselves unrestrainedly to their love prevented them at first from indulging in the sad reflections which the position they were in should inspire in them. They lived as if the cadi had not placed a guard over them and they could easily escape, or as if Couloufe were really the son of Massaoud, and they expected agreeable news from Khokand.

The adventure of Couloufe, in spite of the care Mouzaffer and his son had taken to keep it secret, made so much stir in Samarcand, that several people wished to see the two persons whom love had so strongly united; so that Couloufe and Dilara, exposed to the public curiosity, received fresh visits every day.

One day, a well-to-do looking man came to them, saying he was an officer of the king; that he had heard what had taken place at the cadi's and that he came to assure them that he was interested in their cause; finally he offered them his services so cordially, and he persuaded them so well of his interest, that they thought they could not show him too much gratitude. They begged him to eat with them, and to show the extreme consideration they had for him, Dilara removed her veil, so that

the officer, astonished at the lady's beauty, could not help exclaiming, 'Ah! my lord, I am not surprised at the firmness that you showed before the judge.'

They all sat down at a table covered with several dishes. There were all sorts of pilau, of vegetables flavoured with black and white pepper and fresh butter, of stews spiced with saffron, vinegar, and honey, many kinds of fish and a roast lamb, the tail of which stuffed with aromatic herbs made an agreeable dish.

The slaves, after the repast, brought the finest old red wine of Shiraz, and the golden-yellow wine of Kishmish; then perfumes were handed round, and then, the lady having had a viola handed to her, began to play on it, singing a plaintive air. After that she asked for a lute, tuned it and played on it in a way that charmed the king's officer; then she took a guitar, and played in that manner which is used to lament the absence of lovers.

It was a song she had composed at Caracoram after the disgrace of Couloufe. But she could not sing it without recalling to the mind of her lover scenes which saddened him. The young man fell

into a profound reverie and soon began to weep bitterly.

The officer of the king was surprised at this and asked the cause of his tears.

'Alas!' replied the son of Abdallah, 'what will it serve you to know the cause? It is not less useless to you to know it, than for me to tell it. I was just recalling to my memory my past misfortunes, and I cannot think of those which threaten me without being penetrated by the keenest grief.'

This reply did not at all satisfy the king's officer: 'Young stranger,' he said, 'in God's name relate your adventures to me. It is not at all from curiosity that I wish to hear them, I feel disposed to help you, and perhaps you will not repent of having made me this confidence. Tell me who you are; I see you are not lacking in birth, speak and hide nothing from me.'

'My lord,' replied Couloufe, 'my history is rather long and may weary you.'

'No, no,' said the officer, 'I even beg you to suppress no detail.'

Then the son of Abdallah began the recital of his adventures; he admitted that he was not the

son of Massaoud, and that he had had recourse to imposture to assure the possession of Dilara.

'But,' he added, 'my falsehood has not had the whole effect I expected; they would not believe my word; they have sent a courier to Khokand who will be back in three days; thus the cadi, who is having us watched, will soon discover my deception, and will punish me by an infamous death. Death, however, does not afflict me; it is the approach of the fatal moment which must for ever separate me from the object of my love; this thought alone is the cause of all my grief.'

Whilst he was speaking thus, interrupted with sighs and tears, the lady in her turn melted into tears and sufficiently indicated by the grief which possessed her that her sentiments were the same as those of Couloufe.

The king's officer did not see this spectacle without compassion.

'Dear people,' he said, 'I am touched at your affliction. I would wish to be able to help you and prevent you both from drinking the poisoned cup of separation. Would to God, young man, that I might save you from the danger you run; but that seems to me very difficult. The cadi is

vigilant and inflexible; his vigilance cannot be surprised, and he will not forgive you for having deceived him. All that I can advise you is to put your trust in God who knows how to open the most securely closed doors, and to remove the most insurmountable difficulties. Implore his aid by fervent prayers, and do not despair of coming happily out of this affair, although you see no chance of it.'

At these words the officer took leave of Couloufe and the lady, and retired.

'It must be owned,' then said the daughter of Boyruc, 'that there are in the world some rather peculiar people. They come to offer you their services; if you appear to them distressed, they press you to relate your troubles to them, promising to relieve them, and when by their importunities they have forced you to satisfy their curiosity, all the consolation they give you is to exhort you to take patience. Who would not have thought, seeing this man enter with so much warmth into our interests, that he had the intention to be useful to us and to make at least every effort to serve us? However, after having listened to the tale of our adventures, he leaves us and abandons us to Providence.'

'Madam,' said the son of Abdallah, 'what could he do for us? Let us do him more justice; he looks too like an honest man for it to be possible to suspect him of having from mere curiosity drawn from us the confidence of our misfortunes. No, no, he wanted to please us. I believe in the generous pity he has shown us, and which was apparent even in his silence; but when he saw the evil was irremediable, could he say to us other than what he did? And from whom could we indeed receive help? Heaven alone is capable of delivering me from the danger I am in.'

This unhappy couple harrowed each other in depicting all the horror of their destiny, and passed the next two days in groaning and lamenting. They thought, however, of means of escape; they tested the fidelity of their guards, but found them incorruptible.

Thus the fourth day arrived, the day on which the courier from Khokand was to return, which they feared as much as the son of Mouzaffer ardently wished for it.

As soon as the first rays of that terrible day came to light the apartment of Couloufe, the young man, thinking to see the light for the last time,

rose to go to death. He looked at his wife with eyes in which were depicted grief and despair, and said to her in an almost inaudible voice : ' Farewell, I am going to fulfil my destiny, and carry my head to the cadi. As for you, beautiful Dilara live on, and think sometimes of a man who has so tenderly loved you.'

' Ah ! Couloufe,' replied the lady, melting into tears, ' you are going to die, and you exhort me to live ! Do you think life can have any charm for me ? Cruel man ! you wish me then to drag out languishing and deplorable days ? No, no, I wish to accompany you and descend with you into the tomb. Taher, the odious Taher, shall see what he loves perish with what he hates ; he shall not have occasion to rejoice at your death. Why must you die ? It is on me alone that the punishment should fall ; it is for me, your wife, who made you a perjurer and suggested to you the lie which they wish your death to expiate, it is for me therefore to serve as victim ; it is just at least that I should be punished too. Come, let us go to the place where your torture is prepared ; I am going to tell every one that I prefer to perish with you than to survive you.'

The son of Abdallah opposed his wife's design. He conjured her not to give him so fatal a mark of her affection ; and Dilara on her side, persisting in the wish to die with him, begged him not to oppose her resolution.

Whilst they were disagreeing they heard a great noise at the street-door, and soon they saw the cadi, followed by several persons, among whom were Mouzaffer and his son, enter the courtyard. At this sight the daughter of Boyruc fainted ; and whilst she was in the arms of slaves who hastened to succour her, Couloufe profited by the moment and ran to meet the cadi. But this judge, far from coming to fetch him to lead him to death, made him an obeisance and said with a smiling air :

' My lord, the courier sent to Khokand has arrived, accompanied by a servant of Massaoud, your father, who sends you forty camels loaded with stuffs, fine linen, and other merchandise. We no longer doubt you to be the son of this rich merchant, and we beg you to forget the bad treatment we have subjected you to.'

After the judge had made this speech, which caused extreme astonishment to Couloufe, Mou-

zaffer and his son assured him of their sorrow at the blows he had received.

'I renounce,' said Taher, 'the claims I had on Dilara. I admit she is yours, and I give her up to you on condition that if the fancy takes you to repudiate her soon, and you wish to take her back, you will choose me for friend.'

Couloufe did not know what to think of all he heard. He thought Taher and the cadi were rallying him, and that they were going to speak to him in another tone, when a slave who arrived, kissed his hand and said, presenting a letter to him: 'My lord, your father and your mother are well; they hope passionately to see you again; their eyes and their ears are on the road.'

Couloufe blushed at this speech, and not knowing what to reply, he took the letter, opened it, and found these words :

'Praise be to God alone, and his benediction be upon the great Prophet, his family and his friends. My dear son, since you are no more before my eyes, I have no rest. I am on the thorns of disquietude; the poison of your absence fills my heart, and consumes my life little by little. I have heard from the courier whom the lord

Mouzaffer has sent me the adventure which has befallen you. I have immediately had forty black camels with round eyes laden with several sorts of merchandise which I send you to Samarcand, under the command of Gisher, captain of my caravans. Inform me as soon as possible how you are, so that our heart may be consoled and recover joy and health.

'MASSAOUD.'

Hardly had the son of Abdallah read this letter, than he saw enter his courtyard the forty camels which came from Khokand. Then the captain Gisher said to him: 'My lord my master, have the kindness, I beg you, to order the camels to be unloaded and the bales to be put in some large hall.'

'What does all this mean?' said Couloufe to himself. 'I have seen surprising adventures occur, but, by Allah! this surpasses them all. This Captain Gisher addressed me as if he knew me perfectly. The cadi and Mouzaffer seem to be deceived by the aspect of affairs. Well, although all this passes my comprehension, don't let us fail to profit by it. Fortune wishes doubtless to save me

by one of her capricious strokes, or Heaven has wished to work a miracle in my favour.'

However astonished Couloufe was at this marvellous event, he had the strength to hide his surprise. He put the bales in a room and ordered the camels to be cared for. He even had the assurance to question the camel-driver.

'Gisher,' he said, 'give me news of all my family; have I neither male nor female cousin ill at Khokand ?'

'No, my lord,' replied Gisher, 'all your parents, thanks be to God, are in perfect health, excepting your father, who counts the moments of your absence, and who has charged me to tell you that he hopes you will return promptly to Khokand with the lady you have married.'

Whilst the conductor of the camels was speaking thus, the cadi, Taher, and his father took leave of the son of Abdallah and returned home, persuaded that he really was the son of Massaoud ; but before going, the judge dismissed the guard he had given the newly-married pair. After they had all retired, Couloufe returned to the apartment where he had left Dilara. This lady, through the care of her slaves, had recovered from her swoon.

He related to her what had passed and showed her the letter of Massaoud. She had no sooner read the letter than she cried :

'Just Heaven ! it is you to whom we must return thanks for this astonishing marvel ; you have had pity on two faithful lovers whose bonds you have united.'

'Madam,' said the son of Abdallah, 'it is not time yet to give way to joy. Our troubles are not finished. What do I say—finished ? I am in greater peril than ever. You have made me take the name of a man who is doubtless in Samarcand. The son of Massaoud must be in this town ; his father writes to him and sends him forty camels laden with merchandise, under the conduct of Gisher. This Gisher, who has never apparently seen the son of his master, must have followed the courier of Mouzaffer ; it is easy to understand the rest. This mistake, I admit, would be favourable to us if it would last long enough ; nothing would prevent our taking flight, as henceforth we shall be watched no more. But the news of the arrival of the camels has perhaps already spread in Samarcand ; the real son of Massaoud will hear it and will go and seek the cadi whom he will undeceive.'

How do I know that this judge will not return to find me and to carry me off to punishment ?'

It is thus that Couloufe argued, hovering between fear and hope. He found himself more to be pitied than if he had nothing to hope. He expected every moment to see Taher and the cadi return, undeceived and furious—every moment augmented his anxiety.

Whilst he was thus agitated, the king's officer, the same man who had been to them two days before, arrived.

'My lord,' he said, on entering, 'I have heard that your misfortunes are over, and that Heaven at last has cast a favourable eye on you. I come to testify my joy to you and to reproach you at the same time. You are not sincere. Why have you deceived me ?'

'My dear lord,' replied the son of Abdallah, 'I have told you the truth. I am not from Khokand at all ; I am from Damascus, as I told you. My father has been long dead, and the wealth he left me consumed.'

'Nevertheless,' replied the officer, 'they say that forty camels have arrived for you laden with

various sorts of stuffs, and that Massaoud writes to you as if you were his own son.'

'It is true,' replied Couloufe, 'that I have received his letter and his merchandise, but I am not his son for all that.'

The officer asked how this had occurred, and when Couloufe had detailed it, he said: 'I believe, like you, that it is a mistake and that the son of Massaoud is at Samarcand; therefore I think you had better both escape to-night.'

'That is our intention,' replied Couloufe, 'provided the cadi remains till to-morrow as mistaken as now. We ask nothing better.'

'You need not be uneasy about that,' replied the officer. 'You must hope for the best. Heaven, doubtless, does not wish you to perish, since, by an adventure that savours of the miraculous, it has saved you from the punishment prepared for you.'

To these words he added others to dissipate the fear with which the couple appeared agitated. Then he said farewell to them, wishing them all sorts of prosperity.

When Couloufe and Dilara were alone, they began to talk of their flight, and to prepare for it.

They awaited nightfall with much impatience ; but before it came they heard a great noise and saw suddenly appear in the courtyard of the caravanserai several cavaliers.

At this sight the couple were seized with fright, and thought it was the cadi who was coming to fetch the son of Abdallah, to put him to death. They soon lost this fear : they were the king's guards. The captain who led them got off his horse, and, laden with a packet, entered the room where Couloufe was with his wife.

He saluted them both respectfully, and addressing the husband : 'My lord,' he said, 'I come here on behalf of the great Usbec Kan. He wishes to see the son of Massaoud ; he knows your adventure, he wishes you to relate it to him yourself, and he sends you this robe of honour to enable you to appear fittingly before him.'

The son of Abdallah could well have dispensed with satisfying the king's curiosity ; however, he was obliged to obey. He clothed himself with the robe of honour, and went out with the captain of the guard, who, showing him a mule with a golden saddle and bridle enriched with precious stones,

the stirrup of which was held by a page magnificently attired, said to him : ' Mount this royal mule, and I will conduct you to the palace.'

Couloufe approached the mule, the page lowered the stirrup and presented it to him ; at the same time Couloufe placed his foot in it, jumped lightly into the saddle, and took himself to the palace with the guard.

As soon as he had arrived at the palace, the officers of the king came to receive him, and conducted him to the door of the chamber where the prince was accustomed to receive ambassadors. There the grand vizir took him by the hand and introduced him into a hall, where the king, dressed in garments covered with diamonds, rubies, and emeralds, was seated on an ivory throne, around which stood all the great lords of Tartary.

Couloufe was dazzled by the splendour which surrounded Usbec Kan, and, instead of raising his eyes to the prince, he lowered them and went and prostrated himself at the foot of the throne.

The king, seeing him thus, said : ' Son of Massaoud, I am told that singular ad-

ventures have befallen you. I wish you to relate them to me, and to speak to me without reserve.'

Couloufe, struck by the sound of the voice which thus addressed him, raised his eyes, and recognising in the king the same man who had come to see him, whom he had taken for an officer of Usbec Kan, and to whom he had confided all his secrets, he threw himself face downwards on the ground and began to weep.

The vizir raised him and said : ' Fear nothing, young man ; approach the king and kiss the hem of his robe.'

The son of Abdallah, trembling and confused, advanced to the feet of the king, and after having kissed his robe, retired several paces, and stood with his head bent on his breast.

But Usbec Kan did not leave him long in that position ; he descended the throne, took him by the hand and led him into his cabinet, where he said to him :

' Couloufe, henceforth have peace of mind, and do not fear ill fortune. You will never experience its rigours, you shall not be separated from Dilara, you shall live with her at my court, and you will

hold the place with me which you occupied at Caracoram with the King Mirgehan. When, on the report made to me of your fidelity to your wife, I went to see you out of curiosity, you pleased me, and the confidence you had in me finally determined me to save your life, and to leave you united for ever with the object of your love, which I wished to do in the way you have seen. The forty camels you have are taken from my stables. I have had the stuffs bought which they carried, and this Gisher who conducted them is a eunuch who rarely leaves the seraglio. I had the letter which you have received written by my own private secretary, and for fear lest the courier of Mouzaffer should come and give it the lie, I sent yesterday to meet him, on the road to Khokand, one of my officers, who ordered him from me to make to his master such a report as I wished. It is a pleasure I wished to give myself, and I have enjoyed it completely.'

As soon as the king had finished speaking Coulouse prostrated himself at the feet of the prince, thanked him for his kindness, and promised to be keenly grateful for it all his life. That very day the young man took Dilara to the palace.

Usbec Kan gave them a magnificent apartment, with a considerable pension, and had the story of their loves told by the best poet in Samarcand.

The nurse of Farrukhnaz, after having thus related the story of Couloufe, stopped to hear what would be said of it by her mistress, who, always prejudiced against men, was not yet of the opinion of her women, who maintained that Abdallah had been a perfect lover.

'No, no,' said the princess, 'when he was banished from the court of the King Mirghan he left Caracoram without saying farewell to Dilara, without even trying to have speech of her. I admit the king ordered him to leave the town very abruptly, but love is ingenious and should have furnished him with means of speaking to the daughter of Boyruc if he had been very enamoured of her. And that is not the only reproach that I have to make him. Some days after his arrival at Samarcand, had he been so devoted to his lady, he would not so willingly have wedded himself to another. Moreover, as soon as he had recognised his mistress, did he not wish to repudiate her? Was he not prepared to keep his oath, and would

he not have done so, if, to turn him from it, she had not had recourse to tears? A very ardent lover is not so scrupulous.'

'Madam,' said Sutlumemé, 'it is true that Couloufe's first thought was his honour, and I cannot reproach him for it. I admire, on the contrary, a young man who shows horror for perjury even in the midst of his pleasures. I think a lover of such character more estimable than another, and one can rely on his oaths. But, madam,' she added, 'since you are so delicate, I must relate you another story, which may put your pride at fault, and which you will perhaps find more interesting than those of Couloufe and Aboulcasem.'

At these words of the nurse, all the princess's women uttered cries of joy, and appeared very curious to hear this new story.

Sutlumemé began it in these terms as soon as Farrukhnaz had given her permission :

IV

The Story of Prince Calaf and the Princess of China



AFTER having heard the story of Couloufe, you are going to hear that of the Prince Calaf, the son of an old khan of the Nogais Tartars.

The history of his century makes glorious mention of him. It says that he surpassed all the princes of his time in appearance, in mind, and in valour ; that he was as learned as the greatest doctors ; that he understood the mystic meaning of the commentaries of the Koran, and knew by heart the sentences of Mahomet. It finally call him the hero of Asia and the phoenix of the East.

Indeed, this prince, from the age of eighteen had perhaps no equal in the world ; he was the soul of the councils of his father Timurtasch. I he proffered an advice, the most experienced

ministers approved it, and could not enough admire his prudence and sagacity. Beside this, if it were a time of war he was always seen at the head of the troops, seeking out the enemy, fighting and defeating it.

He had already won several victories, and the Nogais had become so redoubtable by their fortunate successes, that the neighbouring nations did not dare embroil themselves with them. The affairs of the khan his father were in this condition when there came to his court an ambassador from the Sultan of Carizma, who in the audience given him declared that his master required in future that the Nogais Tartars should pay him a yearly tribute, otherwise he would come in person to force them to it with two hundred thousand men, to punish them for not having submitted with a good grace.

The khan thereupon assembled his council. It was discussed whether the tribute should be paid rather than come to blows with so powerful an enemy, or whether his threats should be ignored. Calaf and the majority of those present at the council were of this latter opinion, so that the ambassador was sent back with a refusal.

After that they sent deputies to the neighbouring peoples to represent to them that it would be to their interest to unite with the khan against the Sultan of Carizma, whose ambition was excessive, and who would not fail to exact from them also the same tribute, if he could force the Nogais to it. The deputies succeeded in their negotiations ; the neighbouring nations, and among others the Circassians, promised to join themselves to the khan, and to furnish him with fifty thousand men.

On this promise, besides the standing army which the prince usually had, he raised new troops.

During these preparations among the Nogais, the Sultan of Carizma on his side assembled two hundred thousand combatants and crossed the Jaxartes to Khokand.

He traversed many rich countries, where he found abundance of provision and advanced far on his way before the army of the khan, commanded by Prince Calaf, could be put in the field, because the Circassians and the other auxiliary troops had not been able to join sooner.

As soon as Calaf had received all the aid he

expected, he marched straight to meet the enemy. After a few days his outposts reported to him that the enemy had appeared and was coming towards him in battle array. The prince immediately called a halt, and disposed his troops for combat.

The two armies were nearly equal in number, and the peoples composing them were not less bellicose the one than the other. So the combat that ensued was bloody and determined. It began in the morning and lasted till night. On both sides the officers and soldiers did their duty well. The sultan during action did all that a warrior perfected in the art of warfare could do, and the Prince Calaf more than was to be expected of so young a general. Sometimes the Nogais Tartars had the advantage, and sometimes they were obliged to yield to the efforts of the Carizmians ; so that the two parties, successively conquerors and conquered, sounded the retreat at nightfall, resolved to begin the combat again on the morrow.

But the commander of the Circassians went secretly to the sultan and promised to abandon the Nogais, provided that, by a treaty which he would swear to observe religiously, he engaged

never to exact tribute from the people of Circassia under any pretext whatever. The sultan consented ; the treaty was made, the commander regained his quarters, and the following day, when the battle was about to begin again, the Circassians were seen suddenly to detach themselves from their allies and take the road back to their country.

This treachery caused much chagrin to Prince Calaf, who, seeing himself then much weaker than the sultan, would much have wished to avoid the combat ; but it was not possible. The Carizmians attacked suddenly, and, profiting by the ground which permitted them to spread themselves out, they enveloped the Nogars on all sides.

The latter, however, although abandoned by their best auxiliary troops, and surrounded by enemies, did not lose courage. Animated by the example of their prince, they formed a square, and sustained for a long time the most formidable charges of the sultan ; they were, nevertheless, broken in, and then Calaf, in despair of victory, only thought of escaping the enemy.

He chose several squadrons, and putting himself at their head, he made his way through the

Carizmians. The sultan, informed of his retreat, despatched six thousand cavalry to pursue him. But he evaded them by taking roads which were unknown to them ; he arrived a few days after the battle at his father's court, where he spread sadness and terror by informing them of the misfortune which had befallen him.

If this news depressed Timurtasch, that which he received soon after drove him to utter despair. An officer escaped from the battle came to say that the Sultan of Carizma had put almost all the Nogaïs to the sword, and that he was advancing by forced marches, resolved to put all the khan's family to death and to make the nation subservient to him. The khan then repented having refused to pay tribute ; but as the Arab proverb says, 'What avails repentance after the ruin of the town of Bassora ? '

As time pressed and it was necessary to take flight for fear of falling into the power of the sultan, the khan, the Princess Elmaze his wife, and Calaf took all that was most precious in their treasury, and left their capital, accompanied by several officers of the palace who would not abandon them, and the troops which had cut

their way through the enemy with the young prince.

They took the road to Greater Bulgaria ; their intention was to go and beg a refuge with some sovereign prince. They had been several days on the march and had already gained Mount Caucasus, when a thousand brigands, inhabitants of the mountain, burst suddenly upon them. Although Calaf had hardly four hundred men, he withstood the impetuosity of the brigands ; he even killed a large number of them ; but he lost all his troops and finally remained at the mercy of these bandits, some of whom seized the riches they found, whilst the others took the life of all those who followed the khan.

They spared only the prince, his wife, and son, whom they left however almost naked in the midst of the mountains.

It is impossible to describe the grief of Timurtasch when he saw himself reduced to this extremity. He envied the fate of those who had just perished before his eyes, and giving himself up to despair, he wished to take his life. The princess burst into tears and made the air resound with cries and groans. Calaf alone had the strength to bear

up under the weight of bad fortune ; imbued with the maxims of the Koran and the sentences of Mahomet on predestination, he had a strength of soul that was not to be shaken. The extreme grief to which the khan and his wife gave way was his greatest trouble.

'O my father ! O my mother !' he said to them, 'do not succumb to your misfortunes. Think that it is God who wishes you to be miserable. Let us submit without murmuring to his decrees. Are we the first princes whom his justice has scourged ? How many sovereigns before us have been chased from their dominions, and after having led a wandering life and even being taken for the vilest mortals in foreign lands, have remounted their thrones ! If God has power to take away crowns, he can also give them back. Let us hope that he will be touched by our misery, and that he will make prosperity follow the deplorable situation we are in.'

He added several other consoling words, and as he spoke, his father and mother listening attentively, felt a secret consolation. They finally let themselves be persuaded.

'So be it, my son,' said the khan, 'let us aban-

don ourselves to Providence, and since the evils which surround us are written on the fatal tablet, let us suffer them without complaining.'

At these words the prince, his wife, and son resolved to be brave in their misfortune, continued their way on foot, for the robbers had taken their horses from them. After several days' march they arrived in the territory of the tribe of Berlas.

The khan was exhausted ; he declared he could go no further.

'My lord,' said Calaf, 'do not let us despair of seeing the end of our troubles. Let us go to the principal horde of this tribe, I have a presentiment that our luck may turn.'

They went therefore to the horde where the Khan of Berlas lived. They entered a large tent which served as a hospital for poor strangers, and they slept in a corner, very troubled as to how they would subsist. Calaf left his father and mother in this place and went out and visited the horde, asking charity of the passers by ; he received from them a small sum of money, with which he purchased provisions, which he took at the end of the day to his father and mother. They could not

help weeping when they knew their son had been soliciting alms.

Calaf shared their distress, and said : ' Nothing, I admit, appears to me more mortifying than being reduced to beg ; however, if I cannot otherwise procure succour for you, I shall do it, whatever shame it costs me. But,' he added, ' you have only to sell me as a slave, and with the money you will get, you will have means of living for a long time.'

' What are you saying, my son ? ' cried Timur-tasch. ' You propose to us to live at the expense of your liberty ! Ah ! rather let the misfortune which overwhelms us endure always ! If one of us three must be sold to help the two others, it is I. I am not loth to bear the yoke of servitude for you two.'

' My lord,' replied Calaf, ' a thought occurs to me. To-morrow I shall go and join the porters ; some one will employ me, and we shall thus live by my work. They decided on this. The following day the prince placed himself among the porters of the horde, and waited for someone to employ him, but unfortunately it happened that no one employed him, so that half the day had already passed without his having earned anything. That

distressed him much. ‘If I do not do better,’ he said to himself, ‘how can I nourish my father and mother?’

He wearied of waiting in vain among the porters until some one should address him, so he left the horde to think more freely of a means of subsistence. He sat under a tree, where, after having implored Heaven to have pity upon him, he fell asleep. On awaking, he perceived a falcon of singular beauty; it had a crest of a thousand colours on its head, and wore round its neck a chain of gold leaves, set with diamonds, topazes, and rubies.

Calaf, who understood falconry, offered it his wrist, and the bird perched on it. The Prince of the Nogars was much delighted. ‘Let us see,’ he said to himself, ‘where this will lead us; this bird, according to all appearance, belongs to the king of this horde.’ He was not mistaken; it was the falcon of Alinguer, Khan of Berlas, which the prince had lost at the chase the day before. His huntsmen and falconers were searching the country for it, with all the more ardour and anxiety that their master had threatened them with the extreme penalty if they returned to his court without his bird, which he loved passionately.

Prince Calaf returned to the horde with the falcon. All the people began immediately to cry, 'There is the khan's falcon found ! Blessed be the young man who is going to rejoice our prince by bringing him his bird !' When Calaf had arrived at the royal tent, and appeared there with the falcon, the khan, in a transport of joy, ran to his bird and caressed it a thousand times. Then, addressing the Prince of the Nogars, he asked him where he had found it. Calaf related what had happened. After that the khan said to him :

' You seem to me a stranger. What country are you from, and what is your profession ? '

' My lord,' replied the son of Timurtasch, prostrating himself at his feet, ' I am the son of a merchant of Bulgaria, who possessed great wealth. I was travelling with my father and mother when we met some robbers, who took from us everything but our lives, and we came to this horde, begging by the way.'

' Young man,' replied the khan, ' I am very glad it is you who have found my falcon, for I have sworn to give to the person who brought it back to me the three things he chose to ask me,

so you have only to speak. Tell me what you wish me to give you, and be sure of obtaining it.'

'Since I am permitted to ask three things,' replied Calaf, 'I would wish, firstly, that my father and mother, who are in the hospital, might have a private tent in your majesty's quarter, be kept at your majesty's expense the rest of their days, and even served by the officers of your house. Secondly I desire one of the finest horses in your stables, all saddled and bridled; and finally, a complete and magnificent suit with a rich sabre, and a purse full of gold pieces, in order to make with comfort a journey I am meditating.'

'Your wishes shall be satisfied,' said Alinguier. 'Bring your father and mother to me. I will begin from to-day to have them treated as you wish, and to-morrow, dressed in rich clothes, and mounted on the finest horse in my stables, you can go where you wish.'

Calaf prostrated himself a second time before the khan, and after having thanked him for his kindness, he went to the tent where Elmaze and Timurtasch awaited him impatiently.

'I bring you good news,' he said; 'our fate is changed.' At the same time he related to them

all that had happened to him. This adventure pleased them ; they looked upon it as an infallible mark that the rigour of their destiny was beginning to be softened. They willingly followed Calaf, who conducted them to the royal tent and presented them to the khan. This prince received them very well, and promised them to keep faithfully the vow he had made their son. He did not fail to do so ; he gave them that very day a private tent, had them waited on by the slaves and officers of his house, and ordered them to be treated as himself.

The following day Calaf was clothed in rich garments, he received from the hand of the Prince Alinguer himself a sabre with a diamond hilt, together with a purse filled with gold sequins, and then a very beautiful Turcoman horse was brought to him. He mounted it before all the court, and to show that he knew how to handle a horse, he made it prance in a hundred ways, which charmed the prince and his courtiers.

After having thanked the khan for all his kindness, he took leave of him. He went to find Timurtasch and the Princess Elmaze.

'I have a great wish,' he said to them, 'to see the mighty kingdom of China ; permit me to satisfy it. I have a presentiment that I shall distinguish myself by some brilliant action, and that I shall gain the friendship of the monarch who holds under his sway such vast territory. Permit that, leaving you in a place of safety where you want for nothing, I may follow the impulse which animates me, or rather that I may abandon myself to Heaven which guides me.'

'Go, my son,' said Timurtasch to him ; 'yield to the noble impulse which animates you. Run to the fate which awaits you ; hasten, by your virtue, the slow prosperity which must succeed our misfortune, or, by a gallant death, deserve a dazzling place in the history of unfortunate princes. Depart, we shall await news of you in this tribe, and we will regulate our fortune by yours.'

The young Prince of the Nogais embraced his father and mother, and took the road to China.

It is not related by historians that he met with any adventure on the road. They merely say that, having arrived at the great town of Pekin, he

alighted near a house which was at the entrance, and where dwelt a little old woman who was a widow.

Calaf presented himself at the door. The old woman immediately appeared. He saluted her and said : 'My good mother, will you receive a stranger in your house? If you can give me a lodging in your house, I dare assure you that you will not regret it.'

The old woman looked at the young man, and judging by his well-to-do appearance, as well as by his clothes, that he was not a guest to be despised, she made him a profound inclination of the head, and replied : 'Young stranger of fine appearance, my house is at your service, as well as everything that is in it.'

'And have you,' he replied, 'a fit place in which to put my horse ?'

'Yes,' she said, 'I have.'

At the same time she took the horse by the bridle and led it into a little stable at the back of the house.

Then she returned to Calaf, who, feeling very hungry, asked her if she had no one who could go and buy him something in the market.

The widow replied that she had a grandson of twelve who lived with her, and who would acquit himself very well of this commission. Then the prince took from his purse a gold sequin, and put it into the child's hands, who went off to the market.

In the meanwhile the hostess was much occupied in satisfying the curiosity of Calaf. He asked her a thousand questions: What the customs were of the inhabitants of the town; how many families there were in Pekin; and, finally, the conversation turned to the King of China.

'Tell me, pray,' said Calaf, 'what is the character of this prince? Is he generous, and do you think he would pay any attention to the zeal of a young stranger who offered to serve him against his enemies? In a word, does he deserve that one should attach oneself to his interests?'

'Without doubt,' replied the old woman. 'He is a very good prince, who loves his subjects as much as he is loved by them, and I am very surprised that you have not heard speak of our good King Altoun-Khan, for the reputation of his kindness has spread throughout the world.'

'By the portrait you have drawn me of him,'

replied Prince Calaf, 'I gather that he must be the happiest and most contented monarch of the world.'

'He is not so, however,' replied the widow. 'One may even say that he is very unhappy. Firstly, he has no prince to succeed him : he has had no male child, pray and do good works as he will. I must tell you, however, that the sorrow of having no son does not constitute his greatest trouble. What troubles his life is the Princess Tourandot, his only daughter.'

'And why,' replied Calaf, 'is she a trouble to him ?'

'I am going to tell you,' replied the widow. 'I can talk of that with authority, because it has often been told me by my daughter, who has the honour to be in the palace, among the slaves of the princess.

'The Princess Tourandot,' pursued the old hostess of the Prince of the Nogars, 'is in her nineteenth year. She is so beautiful that the painters who have drawn her portrait, although the most skilful in the East, have all admitted that they were ashamed of their work, and that the brush which best succeeded in doing justice to the

charms of a beautiful face could not depict all those of the Princess of China. However, the divers portraits which have been made of her, although inferior to the original, have not failed to produce terrible effects. She unites with her ravishing beauty such a cultivated mind that she not only knows everything which it is customary to teach persons of her rank, but even the sciences which are only learned by men. She knows how to write the different characters of several languages, she knows arithmetic, geography, philosophy, mathematics, and, above all, theology. She has read the laws and precepts of our legislator, Confucius. In fact, she is as clever as all the doctors together. But her fine qualities are effaced by an unexampled harshness of soul. She tarnishes her merits by a detestable cruelty. Two years ago the King of Thibet sent to ask her in marriage for the prince his son, who had become enamoured of her from a portrait he had seen of her. Altoun-Khan, delighted with this alliance, proposed it to Tourandot. This proud princess, to whom all men appear contemptible, so vain has her beauty made her, rejected the proposal with

disdain. The king became angry with her, and declared that he would be obeyed. But, instead of submitting with a good grace to the wishes of her father, she wept with rage at the idea of being constrained. She was immoderately incensed, as though they had wished to do her some great wrong. In fact, she fretted so that she became ill. The physicians, knowing the cause of her malady, told the king that all their remedies were useless, and that the princess would inevitably lose her life if he persisted in wishing to make her marry the Prince of Thibet. Then the king, who loved his daughter devotedly, alarmed at the danger she was in, went to see her, and assured her that he would send away the ambassador of Thibet with a refusal.

"It is not enough, my lord," said the princess; "I have resolved to let myself die unless you grant me what I am going to ask you. If you wish me to live, you must take an inviolable oath not to oppose my sentiments, and publish an edict by which you will declare that of all the princes who seek my hand, none shall be able to marry me till he has first replied pertinently to the questions

which I shall put to him, before all the legal men in this town ; that if he answers well, I consent to take him as my husband, but that if he replies ill, his head shall be cut off in the courtyard of your palace. By this edict," she added, " which will be made known to the foreign princes who arrive at Pekin, all desire to ask me in marriage will be taken from them, which is what I wish ; for I hate men and do not wish to marry."

" But, my daughter," said the king, " if anyone, despising my edict, presents himself, and answers your questions correctly——"

" Oh ! I do not fear that," she interrupted with precipitation. " I know how to frame such difficult ones that I should embarrass the greatest doctors. I willingly run the risk."

' Altoun-Khan reflected for some time on what the princess exacted from him. " I quite see," he said to himself, " that my daughter does not wish to marry, and that this edict will effectually alarm all her lovers ; so I hazard nothing in giving her this satisfaction ; no harm can come of it. What prince would be fool enough to face such a frightful peril ?" Finally the king, persuaded that his edict would have no evil effects, and that the entire

recovery of his daughter depended on it, had it published, and swore by the laws of China to observe it exactly. Tourandot, reassured by this sacred oath, which she knew the king, her father, would not dare violate, took strength again and enjoyed perfect health. However, the rumour of her beauty attracted several young foreign princes to Pekin. In vain was the tenour of the edict made known to them. As everyone has a good opinion of his own intelligence, and young people especially, they had the audacity to present themselves to reply to the questions of the princess, and not being able to discover their obscure meaning, they all perished miserably one after the other. The king, to whom this justice must be done, seems much touched by their fate. He repents of having taken an oath which binds him, and with all the affection he has for his daughter he would rather have let her die than have preserved her at that price. He does all that he can to prevent these misfortunes. When a lover whom the edict cannot restrain comes to ask him for the hand of the princess, he tries to deter him from his resolution, and he only consents regretfully to his exposing his life. But

it generally happens that he cannot persuade these bold young men. They think only of Tourandot, and the hope of winning her makes them indifferent to the difficulty of obtaining her. But if the king at least appears sensible to the destruction of these unhappy princes, it is not so with his barbaric daughter. She delights in the bloody spectacles which her beauty affords the Chinese. She has so much vanity that the most amiable prince appears not only unworthy of her, but even very insolent to dare to raise his thoughts to alliance with her, and she looks upon his death as a just punishment of his temerity. What is still more deplorable is that Heaven often permits princes to come and sacrifice themselves to this inhuman princess. It is not long since a prince who flattered himself that he was intelligent enough to reply to her questions, lost his life; and to-night another must perish who has, unfortunately for him, come to the court of the King of China in the same hope.'

Calaf was very attentive to what the old woman told him. 'I do not understand,' he said, when she had finished speaking, 'how there are found princes ill-judged enough to go and ask the hand

of the Princess of China. What man can be otherwise than alarmed at the condition without which it cannot be obtained ! Moreover, whatever the artists who have painted her portrait may say of her, although they assert that their work is only an imperfect reflection of her beauty, I believe they have lent her charms, and that their paintings are flattering, since they have produced such powerful effects. In fact, I cannot think that Tourandot is as beautiful as you say.'

' My lord,' replied the widow, ' she is still more charming than I have told you, and you may believe me, for I have seen her several times in going to see my daughter in the palace. Imagine to yourself what you will, depict in your imagination all that can contribute to form a perfect beauty, and be persuaded that you will not be able to represent to yourself anything approaching to the princess.'

The Prince of the Nogars could not credit his hostess's remarks, so hyperbolical did he find them ; he took, however, without knowing why, a secret pleasure in them.

' But, my mother,' he replied, ' are the questions which the king's daughter puts so difficult that

they cannot be answered in a way to satisfy the legal men who judge of them ? For myself, I think that the princes who cannot penetrate the meaning of them are all of small genius, or ignorant men.'

'No, no,' replied the old woman, 'there are no enigmas more obscure than the princess's questions, and it is almost impossible to reply to them well.'

Whilst they were speaking thus of Tourandot and her unfortunate lovers, the little boy who had been sent to the market returned laden with provisions. Calaf seated himself at a table laid for him by the widow, and ate like a man dying of hunger.

In the meanwhile night came on, and soon the kettle-drums of justice were heard in the town. The prince asked what this noise meant.

'It is,' said the old woman, 'to inform the people that someone is about to be executed, and the unfortunate wretch who is going to be immolated is the prince I told you of, who must to-night lose his life for having answered the princess's questions badly. It is the custom to punish the guilty during the day ; but this is a

particular case. The king in his heart detests the punishment meted out to his daughter's suitors, and he does not wish the sun to be the witness of so cruel an action.'

The son of Timurtasch desired to see this execution, the cause of which seemed very singular to him: he left his hostess's house, and, encountering in the street a large crowd of Chinese animated by the same curiosity, he mingled with them and arrived in the courtyard of the palace where so tragic a scene was to take place.

He saw erected in the middle a very high tower of wood, the outside of which from the top to the bottom was covered with branches of cypress, among which were a large quantity of lamps very well arranged, which spread such a strong light that all the courtyard was lit up by them. Fifteen paces from the tower was raised a scaffold all covered with white satin, and around which were ranged several pavilions of tassetas of the same colour. Behind these tents two thousand soldiers of the guard of Altoun-Khan, with naked swords and axes in their hands, formed a double hedge, which served as a barrier

to the people. Calaf was looking attentively at everything, when all of a sudden the sad ceremony, the preparations for which were seen, began by a confused sound of drums and bells from the top of the tower, which were heard afar off; at the same time twenty mandarins, and as many legal men, all clad in long robes of white wool, came out of the palace, advanced towards the scaffold, and, after having walked three times round it, went to seat themselves under the pavilions.

Then appeared the victim, adorned with flowers entwined with cypress leaves, with a blue scarf on his head, and not a red scarf like the criminals whom justice has condemned. He was a young prince hardly eighteen years of age: he was accompanied by a mandarin who held him by the hand, and was followed by the executioner. They all three mounted the scaffold; the sound of the drums and bells immediately ceased.

The mandarin then addressed the prince, in a tone of voice loud enough for half the people to hear. 'Prince,' he said to him, 'is it not true that the tenour of the edict was made known to you as soon as you presented yourself to ask the princess

in marriage? Is it not also true that the king made every effort to deter you from your bold resolution ?'

The prince replied, 'Yes.'

'Recognise, then,' continued the mandarin, 'that it is your fault if you lose your life to-day, and that the king and the princess are not guilty of your death.'

'I pardon it them,' replied the prince. 'I impute it to myself only, and I pray Heaven never to call them to account for the blood which is going to be spilled.'

He had hardly finished these words than the executioner cut off his head with one stroke of the sword. The air immediately resounded anew with the sound of the bells and the noise of the drums. Twelve mandarins came to take the body; they enclosed it in a coffin of ivory and ebony, and put it in a small litter which six of them carried on their shoulders into the garden of the palace, under a dome of white marble, which the king had had built expressly to be the place of sepulture of all the unfortunate princes who were to share the same fate. He often went to weep over the tomb of those who were

there, and he endeavoured by honouring their ashes, to expiate in a measure the barbarity of his daughter.

As soon as the mandarins had borne off the prince who had just perished, the people and the legal men returned home, blaming the king for having been imprudent enough to consecrate his daughter's fury by an oath which he could not violate. Calaf remained in the courtyard of the palace, filled with a thousand perplexing thoughts. He saw near him a man who was in tears ; he judged him to be someone who was interested in the execution which had just taken place, and hoping to know more about it, he spoke to him. 'I am touched,' he said, 'at the keen grief you display, and I sympathise with your trouble, for I do not doubt but you have known well the prince who has just died.'

'Ah ! my lord,' replied the afflicted man, whose tears redoubled, 'I ought to have known him well, since I was his tutor. O unhappy King of Samarcand !' he added, how great will be your grief when you know the strange death of your son : and what man will dare bring you the news of it ?'

Calaf asked how the Prince of Samarcand had become amorous of the Princess of China.

'I will tell you,' said the tutor, 'and you will doubtless be astonished at the story I am going to relate. The Prince of Samarcand,' he continued, 'lived happily at his father's court; the courtiers, looking upon him as a prince who must one day be their sovereign, did not study less to please him than the king himself. He generally spent the day in hunting or throwing the sledge-hammer, and at night he introduced secretly into his apartment the noble youth of the court, with whom he drank all sorts of beverages. He also took pleasure sometimes in seeing beautiful slaves dance and in listening to voices and instruments. In a word, his life was a round of pleasure.'

'Meanwhile, there arrived a famous painter at Samarcand, with several portraits of princesses which he had painted in the different courts he had visited. He came to show them to the prince, who said in looking at the first which he showed him: "These are very fine paintings; I am persuaded that the originals of these portraits are under much obligation to you."

"My lord," replied the painter, "I admit that

these portraits are a little flattered, but I may tell you that I have at the same time one still more beautiful than these, and which, nevertheless, does not approach the original."

'Thus speaking he drew from a small case in which were his portraits, that of the Princess of China. Hardly had my master got it in his hands than, not being able to imagine that nature was capable of producing so perfect a beauty, he cried that there was in all the world no woman so charming and that the portrait of the Princess of China must be still more flattered than the others. The painter protested that it was not so, and assured him that no brush could ever render the grace and charm that there was in the face of the Princess Tourandot. Thus assured, my master bought the portrait, which made such an impression on him that, forsaking one day his father's court, he left Samarcand accompanied only by me; and without telling me his intention he took the road to China and arrived in this town. He proposed serving Altoun-Khan for some time against his enemies, and then to ask his daughter in marriage; but on arriving we learnt the rigour

of the edict, and what is most strange is, that my prince, instead of being keenly afflicted by this news, was rejoiced at it.

"I am going," he said, "to present myself to reply to the questions of Tourandot. I am not wanting in intelligence. I shall obtain this princess."

'There is no need to tell you the rest, my lord,' continued the tutor sobbing; 'you may judge by the sad spectacle which you have just seen that the deplorable Prince of Samarcand was not able to reply, as he hoped, to the fatal questions of this barbaric beauty, who delights in shedding blood and who has already cost the life of several sons of kings. He gave me just now the portrait of this cruel princess when he saw that he must prepare to die. "I entrust to you," he said, "this rare painting. Take good care of this precious trust; you have only to show it to my father when informing him of my fate, and I do not doubt that on seeing so charming a picture, he will pardon me my temerity." But,' added the tutor, 'let who will go and bear to the king his father such sad news; for myself, absorbed in my grief, I shall go far from

here and Samarcand to bemoan one so dear. That is what you wished to know; and here is this dangerous portrait,' he pursued, taking it from under his robe, and throwing it on the ground with indignation; 'here is the cause of my prince's misfortune. Oh, detestable painting! Why had not my master my eyes when you fell into his hands? Oh, inhuman princess! may all the princes of the earth have for you the sentiments which you inspire in me! Instead of being the object of their love, you would inspire them with horror.'

At these words the tutor of the Prince of Samarcand retired full of anger, casting a furious glance at the palace, and without further speech with the Prince of Timurtasch, who promptly picked up the portrait of Tourandot, and, wishing to retire to the old woman's house, got lost in the darkness and insensibly found himself outside the town. He impatiently awaited the daylight in order to contemplate the beauty of the Princess of China. As soon as it dawned, and he could satisfy his curiosity, he opened the box which contained the portrait.

■ He hesitated, however, before looking at it. 'What am I about to do?' he cried. 'Ought I to

place before my eyes so dangerous an object? Think, Calaf, think of the fatal effects it has had; have you already forgotten what the tutor of the Prince of Samarcand has just told you? Do not look at this painting; resist the impulse which moves you whilst it is still only one of curiosity. Whilst you enjoy your reason, you can prevent your destruction. But what am I saying—prevent? What false reasoning is inspiring in me a timid prudence? If I am to love the princess, is not my love already written in the heavens in ineffaceable characters? Moreover, I believe the finest portrait can be seen with impunity; one must be very weak to be troubled at the sight of a vain mingling of colours. Let us fear nothing; let us calmly consider these conquering and assassinating features. I wish to find defects in them and taste the new pleasure of censuring the charms of this too superb princess; and I would wish, for the mortification of her vanity, that she should know that I have looked upon her face without emotion.'

The son of Timurtasch assured himself that he would look with an indifferent eye on the portrait of Tourandot; he looked at it, examined it,

admired the contour of the face, the regularity of the features, the vivacity of the eyes, the mouth, the nose—all seemed perfect to him. He was astonished at so rare a combination, and although on guard against what he saw, he let himself be subject to the charm. An inconceivable trouble agitated him in spite of himself; he knew himself no more. ‘What fire,’ he said, ‘is suddenly animating me?—how is this portrait disordering my senses? Just Heaven! is it the fate of all those who look at this painting to love the inhuman princess it represents? Alas! I feel too well that it is making on me the same impression that it has made on the unhappy Prince of Samarcand. I succumb to the features which were his ruin, and far from being terrified at his pitiable fate I almost envy his misfortune. What a change! Great God! I did not conceive just now how one could be mad enough to despise the rigour of the edict, and at this moment I see nothing to alarm me, all the danger has disappeared. No, incomparable princess,’ he continued, looking at the portrait with a tender air, ‘no obstacle deters me. I love you in spite of your barbarity, and since it is permitted to me to aspire to your hand I wish from to-day

to try to obtain you. If I perish in such a fine enterprise, I shall feel in dying only the grief of not being able to win you.' Calaf, having resolved to ask the princess in marriage, returned to his old widow, whose house he had no little difficulty in finding, for he had wandered far from it in the night.

'Ah! my son,' said his hostess as soon as she saw him, 'I am charmed to see you again. I was very troubled about you, I feared some disastrous accident had happened to you; why did not you return sooner?'

'My good mother,' he replied, 'I am sorry to have caused you anxiety, but I lost my way in the dark.' Then he related to her how he had met the prince's tutor, and he did not fail to repeat all he had told him; then, showing the portrait of Tourandot, 'See,' he said, 'whether this painting is merely an imperfect image of the Princess of China; for myself, I cannot imagine that it does not equal the beauty of the original.'

'By the soul of the Prophet!' cried the old woman, after having examined the portrait, 'the princess is a thousand times more beautiful and more charming still than she is represented

here. I would you had seen her; you would be persuaded that all the painters of the world who might undertake to paint her as she is would not succeed, I do not except even the most famous.'

'You give me great pleasure,' replied Prince Calaf, 'in assuring me that the beauty of Tourandot is above all efforts of painting. How this assurance flatters me! It strengthens me in my intention, and excites me to attempt at once such a fine enterprise. Were I only now before the princess! I am burning with impatience to try whether I shall be more fortunate than the Prince of Samarcand.'

'What are you saying, my son?' replied the widow. 'What enterprise are you daring to form and think of executing?'

'My good mother,' replied Calaf, 'I propose to-day to present myself to answer the questions of the princess. I only came to China to offer my sword to the great King Altoun-Khan, but it is better to be his son-in-law than an officer of his army.'

At these words the old woman began to cry. 'Ah, my lord,' she said, 'in God's name do not persist in such a bold resolution. You will perish

without doubt if you are bold enough to come forward as a suitor of the princess. Instead of being charmed with her beauty detest her rather, since she is the cause of so many tragic events; represent to yourself that it will cause grief to your parents when they receive news of your death; be touched at the mortal grief in which you are about to plunge them.'

'Pray, good mother,' interrupted the son of Timurtasch, 'cease depicting to me things so calculated to distress me. I know that if I end my life to-day it will be an inexhaustible source of tears to the authors of my being, perhaps even, for I know their love for me, they may die of grief at hearing of my death. However cognisant, nevertheless, I should be, and indeed am, of their sentiments, I must yield to the ardour which dominates me. But what am I saying? Is it not also to make them happier that I wish to expose my life? Yes, doubtless their interest is in accord with the desire which animates me, and if my father were here, so far from opposing my design, he would incite me to execute it promptly. I am resolved upon it; therefore do not waste time in trying to persuade me, for nothing can shake me.'

When the old woman saw that her young guest did not listen to her advice, her grief redoubled. 'So be it, my lord,' she said; 'you cannot be prevented from rushing on to your destruction. Why need you have come to lodge in my house? Why have I spoken to you of Tourandot? You became enamoured of her from the portrait I drew of her. Unhappy woman that I am, it is I who have destroyed you; why must I have your death on my conscience?'

'No, good mother,' the Prince Calaf interrupted a second time, 'it is not you who cause my misfortune. Do not impute to yourself the love I have for the princess, I was bound to love her, and I am fulfilling my destiny. Moreover, who has told you that I shall reply badly to her questions? I am not uneducated, nor without intelligence, and Heaven has perhaps reserved to me the honour of delivering the King of China from the distress which a terrible oath causes him. But,' he added, drawing out the purse which the Khan of Berlas had given him, and in which there were still a considerable number of gold pieces, 'my fate is, I admit, uncertain, and I may die, so I make you a present of this purse to console you for my death.'

You may even also sell my horse and keep the money, for I shall not want it, whether I receive the daughter of Altoun-Khan as the price of my audacity, or whether my death must be the sad reward of it.'

The widow took the proffered purse, saying : 'O my son ! you are much mistaken if you think these gold pieces console me for your loss. I am going to employ them in good works, distributing a part of it in the hospitals for the poor, who suffer their misery in patience and whose prayers in consequence are so agreeable to God. I shall give the rest to the ministers of our religion, so that they may all pray Heaven to inspire you and not permit you to expose yourself to death. All the favour that I ask of you is not to go to-day and present yourself to answer the questions of Tourandot. Wait till to-morrow. The time is not long ; give me time to interest good people and Heaven in you. After that you can do as you please. Grant me, I beg, this satisfaction. I venture to say you owe it to a person who has already conceived for you so much friendship that she would be inconsolable were you to perish.'

Certainly, Calaf had an appearance which

spoke well in his favour ; beside being one of the handsomest and best made princes in the world, he had easy and agreeable manners, so that to see him was to love him. He was touched at the grief and affection which this good old woman displayed.

'Well, my mother,' he said, 'I will grant you the favour you ask me ; I will not go and ask the hand of the princess to-day. But to tell you the truth, I do not think anything can make me change my mind.'

He did not leave the widow's house all day. She went to distribute alms in the hospitals, and bought with good solid cash the intercession of the priests with Heaven ; she also had chickens and fish sacrificed to the idols.

The genii were not forgotten either ; rice and vegetables were offered them in sacrifice in the places consecrated to this ceremony. But all the prayers of the priests and the ministers of the idols, although well prayed, did not produce the effect which Calaf's good hostess had expected ; for the next morning he seemed more determined than ever to ask the hand of Tourandot.

'Farewell, my good mother,' he said to the

widow. 'I am sorry you gave yourself so much trouble for me yesterday ; you might have spared yourself, for I assured you that I should not be of a different mind to-day.'

At these words he quitted the old woman, who, overcome by the keenest grief, covered her face with her veil, and remained with her head on her knees, inexpressibly overwhelmed.

The young Prince of the Nogairs, perfumed with essences and more beautiful than the moon, betook himself to the palace. He saw at the gate five elephants joined together, and on both sides was a hedge of two thousand soldiers with helmets on their heads, armed with bucklers and covered with iron plates. One of the commanding officers, judging by Calaf's appearance that he was a stranger, stopped him and asked him his business at the palace.

'I am a foreign prince,' replied the son of Timurtasch, 'and I come to present myself to the king to pray him to accord me permission to answer the questions of the princess his daughter.'

The officer at these words, looking at him with astonishment, said to him : 'Prince, do you know

that you come here to seek death? You would have done better to remain in your own country than to form the design which brings you here. Retrace your steps and do not flatter yourself with the false hope that you will obtain the barbarous Tourandot. Were you more learned than a mandarin of science you would never discover the meaning of her ambiguous words.'

'I thank you for your advice,' replied Calaf; 'but I have not come so far to recoil.'

'Go then to death,' replied the officer, with a chagrined air, since it is impossible to prevent you.' At the same time he let him enter the palace, and then turning towards several other officers who had heard their conversation: 'How beautiful and well made that prince is,' he said to them. 'It is a pity he should die so soon.'

Calaf, however, traversed several halls, and at last found himself in the one in which the king was accustomed to give audience to his people. There was in it a throne of steel, made in the form of a dragon about six feet high. Four lofty columns of the same material upheld a vast dais of yellow satin ornamented with precious stones. Altoun-Khan, dressed in a caftan of gold

brocade on a red ground, was seated on the throne with an air of gravity which was marvellously enhanced by a tuft of very long black hair divided into three curls which he had in the middle of his beard.

This monarch after having listened to some of his subjects, cast his eyes by chance on Prince Calaf who was in the crowd. As he seemed to him a stranger, and as he saw by his noble appearance as well as by his magnificent clothes that he was no ordinary person, he called one of his mandarins, and pointing out Calaf, ordered him in a low voice to inform himself as to his station and the object which had brought him to his court.

The mandarin approached the son of Timurtasch and told him that the king wished to know who he was, and whether he had anything to ask him.

'You may tell the king your master,' replied the young prince, 'that I am the only son of a sovereign, and that I have come to endeavour to merit the honour of being his son-in-law.'

Altoun-Khan no sooner heard the answer of the Prince of the Nogais than he changed colour : his

august countenance became pale as death ; he ceased giving audience ; he dismissed everybody ; then he descended his throne and approached Calaf.

'Bold young man,' he said to him, 'do you know the rigour of my edict, and the unhappy fate of all those who up till now have persisted in wishing to obtain the princess my daughter ?'

'Yes, my lord,' replied the son of Timurtasch, 'I know all the danger I run : my eyes have even been the witness of the final and just punishment which your majesty has made the Prince of Samarcand suffer ; but the deplorable end of these audacious men who have vainly flattered themselves with the sweet hope of possessing the Princess Tourandot, only stimulates the desire that I have to deserve her.'

'What madness !' replied the king ; 'hardly has one prince lost his life than another offers himself for the same fate. It would seem they take pleasure in immolating themselves. What blindness ! Consider, prince, and be less prodigal with your blood. You inspire more pity in me than all those who have already come here to seek death, and I feel an inclination for you growing in me, and I wish to

do all in my power to prevent your perishing. Return to your father's states and do not cause him the unhappiness of hearing the report that he will not see his only son again.'

'My lord,' replied Calaf, 'it is very pleasant to me to hear from the lips of your majesty himself that I have the good fortune to please you. It presages well for me. Perhaps, touched by the misfortunes which the beauty of the princess causes, Heaven wishes to make use of me to put a stop to them, and at the same time assure the repose of your life which is troubled by the necessity of authorising such cruel actions. Do you indeed know that I shall reply badly to the questions which will be put to me? What certainty have you that I shall perish? If others have not been able to unravel the meaning of the obscure words of Tourandot, does it follow that I shall not be able to do so? No, my lord, their example cannot make me renounce the dazzling honour of having you for a father-in-law.'

'Ah! unfortunate prince,' replied the king, sorrowfully, 'you wish to end your life; the lovers who presented themselves before you to reply to my daughter's fatal questions employed the same

language. They all hoped they would discover her meaning, and they could not succeed. Once more, my son,' he continued, 'let yourself be persuaded. I like you, and wish to save you : do not make my good intention futile by your obstinacy. Place no trust in the intelligence you feel yourself possessed of. You mistake if you think you can answer immediately what the princess will put to you. However, you will not have many minutes to reply ; it is the rule. If you do not immediately give an accurate answer, and one approved by all the doctors who will be the judges, you will be immediately declared worthy of death, and will be led to punishment the following night. So, prince, retire. Pass the rest of the day in thinking what you have to do : consult wise people : reflect and come to-morrow and tell me what you have resolved upon.'

Thus saying, he left Calaf, who went from the palace very mortified at what the king had said to him, and returned to his hostess without paying the least attention to the terrible danger to which he wished to expose himself. As soon as he returned to the old woman and had related to her all that had passed at the palace, she began again to

harangue him and do all she could to deter him from the undertaking ; but she gained nothing by her fresh efforts, except that she irritated her young guest and made him still more determined in his resolution. He returned the following day to the palace and had himself announced to the king, who received him in his cabinet, not wishing anyone to be present at their conversation.

‘Well, prince,’ said Altoun-Khan, ‘am I to rejoice or be afflicted at the sight of you ? What are your feelings ?’

‘My lord,’ replied Calaf, ‘I am still in the same disposition. When I had the honour yesterday of presenting myself before your majesty, I had already reflected. I am determined to suffer the same punishment as my rivals, if Heaven has not otherwise ordained.’

At this speech, the king smote his breast, tore his necklace and some hairs from his beard.

‘How unhappy I am,’ he cried, ‘to have conceived so much friendship for this man ! The death of the others has not caused me such pain as this. Ah ! my son,’ he continued, embracing the young prince with an emotion which affected him much, ‘yield to my grief, if my

arguments are not enough to shake you. I feel that the stroke which takes your life will inflict a mortal blow on me. Renounce, I beg, the possession of my cruel daughter; you will find in the world other princesses enough whom you can possess. Why persist in the pursuit of an inhuman woman whom you cannot obtain? Live, if you wish, at my court. You shall hold the first place in it after me, you shall have beautiful slaves, pleasure shall pursue you everywhere, in a word, I shall look upon you as my own son. Desist, then, from the pursuit of Tourandot, that I may at least have the satisfaction of snatching one victim from this sanguinary princess.'

The son of Timurtasch was very sensible of the friendship which the King of China displayed towards him, but he replied, 'My lord, let me, I beg, expose myself to the danger from which you wish to turn me. The greater it is the more it tempts me. I will even admit to you that the cruelty of the princess secretly flatters my love. It is a delightful pleasure to me to think that I am perhaps the happy mortal who is to triumph over this proud woman. In God's name,' he continued, 'let your majesty cease to combat a design which

my glory, my repose, and my life require me to execute, for I cannot live if I do not obtain Tourandot.'

Altoun-Khan, seeing Calaf unshakable in his resolution, was keenly afflicted at it. 'Ah ! bold young man,' he said, 'your destruction is assured since you persist in asking for my daughter. Heaven is witness that I have done all I can to inspire reasonable sentiments in you ; you reject my advice, and prefer to perish to following it. Do not let us speak of it any more. You shall soon receive the reward of your foolish persistency. I consent to your undertaking to answer the questions of Tourandot. But I must first do you the honours which I am accustomed to offer to the princes who seek alliance with me.'

At these words, he called the chief of the first corps of eunuchs ; he ordered him to conduct Calaf to the prince's palace, and to give him two hundred eunuchs to wait upon him.

Hardly had the prince arrived in the palace to which he had been conducted than the principal mandarins came to salute him, that is to say they fell on their knees and lowered their heads to the ground, saying one after another :

'Prince, the perpetual servant of your illustrious race comes to make reverence to you in that capacity.' Then they made him presents and retired.

The king, however, who felt a great friendship for the son of Timurtasch and had compassion on him, sent for the most talented, or at least the most famous professor of his royal college, and said to him : 'Doctor, there is at my court a new prince who asks for my daughter. I have spared nothing to deter him, but in vain. I would wish you to bring him to reason with your eloquence ; it is for that I summon you here.'

The doctor obeyed ; he went to see Calaf and had a very long conversation with him. Then he returned to Altoun-Khan and said : 'My lord, it is impossible to persuade this young prince ; he is determined to win the princess or die. When I recognised that it was a mistake to attempt to conquer his resolution, I was curious to see whether his obstinacy had any other foundation than his love. I interrogated him on several different matters and I found him so learned that I was surprised. He is a Mussulman, and he seems to me perfectly instructed in all that appertains to

his religion. In fact, to tell your majesty what I think, I believe that if any prince is capable of replying well to the princess's questions, it is he.'

'O doctor!' cried the king, 'what you say delights me. Please Heaven this prince may become my son-in-law. As soon as I saw him, I felt an affection for him : may he be more fortunate than the others who have come to die in this town !' The good King Altoun-Khan did not content himself with making vows for Calaf, he endeavoured to make propitious to him the spirits who preside in the heavens, in the sun and the moon.

To this end he ordered public prayers, and made solemn sacrifices in the temples. By his order a bullock was sacrificed to Heaven, a goat to the sun, and a sucking-pig to the moon. Moreover, he had it published in Pekin that everyone should appeal to Heaven in favour of the prince who came to ask for the princess.

After the prayers and sacrifices, the Chinese monarch sent his chancellor to Calaf, to warn him to hold himself in readiness to reply on the morrow to the princess's questions and to tell him that they would not fail to conduct him to the divan, and that the persons who were to com-

pose the assembly had already received the order to appear there.

Determined as was Calaf on the adventure, he did not pass the night without uneasiness. If sometimes he dared to trust to his genius and promise himself a happy success, sometimes, losing this confidence, he represented to himself the shame he would experience if his replies did not please the divan. He also thought sometimes of Elmaze and Timurtasch. ‘Alas !’ he said, ‘if I die, what will become of my father and mother ?’

The daylight found him still in this agitated state. He presently heard the sound of several bells and a great noise of drums. He guessed that it was to summon to the council all those who were to appear there. Then, turning his thoughts to Mahomet : ‘O great Prophet !’ he said, ‘you see the state I am in ; inspire me. Shall I go to the divan or shall I turn and tell the king that the danger alarms me ?’

He had hardly said these words than he felt all his fears melt away and his courage revive ; he rose and put on a caftan and a mantle of red silk with gold flowers which Altoun-Khan sent him, with blue silk stockings and shoes.

As he finished dressing six mandarins, with shoes on their feet and dressed in very large robes of a crimson colour, entered his apartment, and after having saluted him in the same manner as those of the preceding day, they told him that they came from the king to conduct him to the divan. He allowed himself to be conducted ; they traversed a courtyard, walking through a double line of soldiers, and when they had arrived in the first council-hall they found more than a thousand singers and players on instruments, who, singing and playing in concert, made an astonishing noise. From there they advanced into the hall where the council was held, a hall which communicated with the inner palace. All the persons who were to be present at this assembly were already seated under pavilions of different colours, which were ranged around the hall.

The most prominent mandarins appeared on one side, the chancellor with the professors of the royal college were on the other, and several doctors whose capacity was well known occupied the other places. In the midst were two golden thrones placed on two triangular seats. As soon as Prince Calaf appeared, the noble and learned

audience saluted him with every mark of great respect, but without saying a word to him, because everyone, expecting the arrival of the king, kept a profound silence.

The sun was about to rise. As soon as the first rays were seen to shine, two eunuchs opened on both sides the curtains of the door of the inner palace, and immediately the king came out, accompanied by the Princess Tourandot, who wore a long robe of silken tissue of gold, and a veil of the same stuff which covered her face.

They both mounted their thrones by five silver steps.

When they had taken their places, two young girls of perfect beauty appeared, one at the side of the king and the other at the side of the princess. They were palace slaves of Altoun-Khan. Their faces were uncovered, they had great pearls in their ears, and they stood with a pen and paper, ready to write what the king ordered them.

During this time, all the persons in the assembly who had risen at the sight of Altoun-Khan, remained standing with much gravity and half-closed eyes. Calaf alone looked about everywhere,

or rather he looked only at the princess, whose majestic bearing he admired.

When the powerful monarch of China had ordered the mandarins and doctors to be seated, one of the six lords who had conducted Calaf, and who were standing with him at fifteen arms' lengths from the two thrones, knelt and read a notice containing the demand made by this foreign prince for the Princess Tourandot. Then he rose and told Calaf to make three reverences to the king. The Prince of the Nogays did so with such grace that Altoun-Khan could not help smiling to show him that he regarded him with pleasure.

Then the chancellor rose from his place and read aloud the fatal edict which condemned to death all the bold lovers who replied ill to the questions of Tourandot. Then addressing Calaf: 'Prince,' said he, 'you have just heard on what conditions the princess can be obtained; if the picture of the present danger makes any impression on your mind, it is still permitted to you to retire.'

'No,' replied Prince Calaf; 'the reward to be gained is too beautiful for me to be cowardly enough to renounce it.'

The king, seeing Calaf resolved to reply to the

questions of Tourandot, turned towards the princess, and said to her: 'My daughter, it is for you to speak; put to this young prince the questions you have prepared, and may it please all the spirits to whom sacrifices were made yesterday, that he may discover the meaning of your words!'

Tourandot at these words said: 'I call Heaven to witness that it is with regret that I see so many princes die, but why do they persist in wishing me to be theirs, why will they not let me live quietly in my palace, without coming to attack my liberty? Know then, bold young man,' she added, addressing Calaf, 'you will have no reproach to make me when, following the example of your rivals, you will have to suffer a cruel death. You alone are the cause of your destruction, since I do not force you to come and ask my hand.'

'Beautiful princess,' replied the Prince of the Nogais, 'I know all that can be said on the subject. Put, I pray you, your questions to me, and I am going to try and unravel their meaning.'

'Well,' replied Tourandot, 'tell me what is the creature which belongs to all countries, is beloved by all, and who cannot endure its like?'

'Madam,' replied Calaf, 'it is the sun.'

'He is right,' cried the doctors. 'It is the sun.'

'Who is the mother,' asked the princess, 'who, after having given birth to her children, devours them all when they have grown up?'

'It is the sea,' replied the Prince of the Nogais, 'because the rivers which discharge themselves into the sea draw from it their source.'

Tourandot, seeing that the young prince replied correctly to her questions, was so piqued at it that she resolved to spare nothing to bring about his destruction.

'What is the tree,' she said, 'the leaves of which are white on one side and black on the other?'

She did not content herself with proposing this question. The malignant princess, in order to dazzle and confusc Calaf, lifted her veil at the same time and let all the assembly see the beauty of her face, to which rage and shame added fresh charms. Her head was adorned with natural flowers, arranged with infinite art, and her eyes appeared more brilliant than the stars. She was as beautiful as the sun when it shows

itself in all its splendour through an opening in a dark cloud.

The amorous son of Timurtasch, at the sight of this incomparable princess, instead of replying to the question put to him, remained silent and immovable.

Immediately the whole divan, which was interested on his behalf, was seized with a mortal terror. The king himself grew pale and thought the young prince was done for.

But Calaf, recovering from the surprise which the beauty of Tourandot had suddenly caused him, soon reassured the assembly by these words : 'Charming princess, I beg you to pardon me if I have remained confused for a few moments : I thought I saw one of those heavenly objects which form the most beautiful adornment of the abode promised to the faithful after death. I could not see so many attractions without being troubled. Have the kindness to repeat the question you put to me, for I do not remember it. You have made me forget everything.'

'I asked you,' said Tourandot, 'what the tree was, all the leaves of which are white on one side and black on the other ?'

'That tree,' replied Calaf, 'represents the year, which is composed of days and nights.'

This answer again received applause in the divan; the mandarins and doctors said it was correct, and bestowed much praise on the young prince.

Then Altoun-Khan said to Tourandot :

'Come, my daughter, confess yourself conquered, and consent to marry your vanquisher. The others were not able to answer even one of your questions, and he, as you see, explains them all.'

'He has not yet won the victory,' replied the princess, putting on her veil again to hide her confusion and the tears she could not help shedding. 'I have other questions to put to him, but I shall put them to-morrow.'

'Oh, as for that, certainly not!' replied the king. 'I shall not allow you to put questions to him eternally; all that I can allow is that you put another to him presently.'

The princess protested, saying she had only prepared those which had just been interpreted, and she begged the king her father not to refuse

her permission to interrogate the prince on the following day.

'I will not grant it you,' cried the Chinese monarch in anger. 'You only seek to put the young prince at fault, and I only think of freeing myself from the frightful oath which I was imprudent enough to make. Ah! cruel woman, you only thirst for blood ; the death of your lovers is a pleasant spectacle for you. The queen, your mother, affected by the first misfortunes you caused, died of grief at having given birth to so barbarous a daughter ; and, as for myself, as you know, I am plunged in a melancholy nothing can dissipate since I have seen the fatal consequences of my complaisance towards you. But, thanks to the spirits which preside in Heaven, in the sun, and in the moon, and to whom my sacrifices have been agreeable, no more of those horrible executions which make your name execrable shall take place in my palace. Since this prince has replied well to what you have put to him, I ask all this assembly whether it is not just that he should be your husband ?'

The mandarins and doctors broke out into

murmurs, and the chancellor said : ‘ My lord, your majesty is no longer bound by the oath which you took to have this rigorous edict executed. It is for the princess now to perform her part of it. She promised her hand to him who should reply correctly to her questions. A prince has just answered them in a manner which has satisfied all the divan. She must keep her promise, or, without doubt, the spirits charged with the punishment of perjurers will punish her soon.’

Tourandot kept silence during this time. Her head on her knees, she appeared absorbed in deep grief.

Calaf, perceiving it, prostrated himself before Altoun-Khan and said to him : ‘ Great king, whose justice and goodness make the vast empire of China to flourish, I ask pardon of your majesty. I see that the princess is in despair at my having had the good fortune to answer her questions. She would doubtless much rather I had merited death. Since she has such an aversion to men that, in spite of her given word, she refuses herself to me, I readily renounce the rights I have over her, on condition that in her

turn she replies correctly to a question I am going to put to her.'

The whole assembly was somewhat surprised at this speech. 'Is this young prince mad?' they said low to one another, 'to risk losing what he has just won at the peril of his life? Does he think he can put a question which will embarrass Tourandot? He must have lost his wits.' Altoun-Khan was also very much astonished at what Calaf dared to ask him.

'Prince,' he said, 'have you well weighed the words you have just spoken?'

'Yes, my lord,' replied the Prince of the Nogais, 'and I implore you to grant me this favour.'

'I will,' replied the king; 'but whatever may result from it I declare I am no longer bound by the oath that I have made, and that henceforth I shall have no prince put to death.'

'Divine Tourandot,' replied the son of Timurtasch, addressing the princess, 'you have heard what I have said. Although in the judgment of this learned assembly your hand is due to me; although you belong to me, I give you back to yourself; I abandon marriage with you;

I deprive myself of so precious a possession, provided you reply precisely to the question I am going to put to you ; but on your side swear that if you do not reply correctly to it, you will consent with a good grace to my happiness and will crown my love.'

'Yes, prince,' said Tourandot, 'I accept the condition. I swear it by all that is most sacred, and call upon this assembly to witness my oath.'

All the divan was in a state of expectancy as to the question Calaf was going to put to the princess, and there was not one of them but blamed the young prince for exposing himself unnecessarily to losing the daughter of Altoun-Khan ; they were all shocked at his boldness.

'Beautiful princess,' said Calaf, 'what is the name of the prince, who, after having suffered endless fatigue and begged his bread, is at this moment crowned with glory and joy ?'

The princess remained some time reflecting, then she said : 'It is impossible for me to reply to that immediately, but I promise to tell you tomorrow the name of that prince.'

'Madam,' cried Calaf, 'I did not ask for delay, and it is not just to grant it you ; however, I will

give you this satisfaction as well ; I hope after that you will be too pleased with me to make any difficulty about marrying me.'

'She must make up her mind to it then,' said Altoun-Khan, 'if she does not reply to the question proposed. Let her not attempt, by falling ill, or feigning to do so, to escape her lover ; if my oath did not engage me to grant her to him, and if she were not his according to the edict, I would rather let her die than dismiss this young prince. What more amiable man can she ever encounter ?'

Thus saying, he rose from his throne and dismissed the assembly. He entered the inner palace with the princess, whence she retired to her own palace.

As soon as the king had left the divan, all the doctors and mandarins complimented Calaf on his intelligence. 'I admire,' said one, 'your prompt and easy conception.' 'There is not,' said another, 'either a bachelor, master, or even a doctor more penetrating than yourself. All the princes who have presented themselves up till now had nothing like your merit : and we are extremely rejoiced that you have succeeded in your enterprise.' The

Prince of the Nogais was not a little occupied in thanking all those who hastened to felicitate him.

Finally the six mandarins who had conducted him to the council led him back to the same palace whence they had fetched him, whilst the others, with the doctors, went away, not without uneasiness as to the answer which the daughter of Altoun-Khan would make to his question.

The Princess Tourandot regained her palace, followed by two young slaves who were in her confidence. As soon as she reached her apartment she removed her veil, and throwing herself on the sofa she gave free vent to the affliction which agitated her. Shame and grief were seen depicted on her countenance ; her eyes, already bathed in tears, shed tears afresh ; she tore out the flowers which adorned her head, and disordered her beautiful hair. When her two favourite slaves wished to console her, she said to them : ‘Leave me both of you ; cease to pay superfluous attentions to me, I listen to nothing but my despair, I wish to weep and grieve. Ah ! what will be my confusion tomorrow, when in the midst of the council, before the greatest doctors of China, I have to admit that I cannot answer the proposed question. “Is that,”

they will say, "the brilliant princess who prides herself on knowing everything, and to whom the guessing of the most difficult enigma is as nothing!" Alas!' she continued, 'they are all on the side of the young prince. I saw them become pale, alarmed, when he appeared embarrassed, and full of joy when he unravelled the meaning of my questions. I shall have the cruel mortification to see them rejoice again in my trouble when I confess myself conquered. What pleasure will not this shameful avowal cause them, and what torture for me to be reduced to to make it!'

'My princess,' said one of the slaves to her, 'instead of grieving beforehand, instead of representing to yourself the shame you must experience to-morrow, would it not be better to think of avoiding it? Is what he has asked you so difficult that you cannot answer it? With your genius and penetration, will you not be able to achieve it?'

'No,' replied Tourandot, 'it is impossible. He asks me what the name is of the prince who, after having suffered endless fatigue, and begged his bread, is at this moment crowned with joy and glory? I know well that he is himself this prince, but, not knowing him, I cannot say his name.'

'However, madam,' replied the same slave, 'you have promised to name this prince to-morrow at the divan. When you made this promise, you doubtless hoped to keep it ?'

'I hoped nothing,' replied the princess, 'and I only asked for time in order to let myself die of grief before being obliged to admit my shame and marry the prince.'

'What a violent resolution !' then said the other favourite slave. 'I know well, madam, no man is worthy of you, but it must be admitted that this one is of singular merit ; his beauty, his good appearance, and his intelligence, ought to speak to you in his favour.'

'I do him justice,' interrupted the princess ; 'if there be in the world a prince who deserves that I should look upon him with a favourable eye, it is he. Just now even, I confess, before interrogating him, I pitied him, I sighed on seeing him, and, as has never happened to me before, I almost hoped he might reply correctly to my questions. It is true that at the moment I blushed at my weakness, but my pride surmounted it, and the correct replies he made me ended by revolting me against him ; the applause of the doctors mortified me so

much that I felt and still feel only hatred for him. O unhappy Tourandot! die at once of regret and rage at having found a young man who has been able to cover you with shame, and to force you to become his wife.'

At these words her tears fell afresh, and in the violence of her grief she spared neither her hair nor her clothes. More than once she even put her hands to her cheeks, to tear them and punish them as the first indicators of her confusion, but her slaves, who watched over her, saved her countenance. But it was in vain they tried to succour her, they could not calm her agitation. Whilst she was in this frightful state, the Prince of the Nogars, charmed at the result of the divan, was overcome with joy, and indulged the hope of winning his love the following day.

The king having returned from the council chamber to his apartment, sent for Calaf to talk in private over what had taken place at the divan. The prince immediately obeyed the summons of the monarch, who said to him, after having embraced him with much tenderness: 'Ah, my son, come and relieve me from the uneasiness I am in. I fear lest my daughter may reply to

the question you have put to her. Why have you run the risk of losing the object of your love ?'

' My lord,' replied Calaf, ' let not your majesty be apprehensive. It is impossible for the princess to tell me who is the prince whose name I asked her, since I am that prince, and no one at your court knows me.'

' You have reassured me,' cried the delighted king. ' I was alarmed, I admit. Tourandot is very penetrating, the subtlety of her mind made me tremble for you, but, Heaven be thanked, you have quieted me. Whatever facility she may have in detecting the meaning of enigmas, she cannot guess your name. I do not accuse you any longer of being a bold man, and I perceive that what appeared to me a defect of prudence is an ingenious trick which you have made use of, to remove all pretext from my daughter for refusing herself to you.'

Altoun-Khan, after having laughed with Calaf over the question put to the princess, prepared to amuse himself with hunting. He put on a light and narrow caftan, and enclosed his beard in a black satin bag. He ordered the mandarins to hold themselves in readiness to accompany him, and had

hunting clothes given to the Prince of the Nogais. They hastily ate some morsels of food, then left the palace. The mandarins, in ivory chairs enriched with gold, and uncovered, were at the head. Each one had six men who carried him, two who walked before him with whips of cord, and two others who followed him with silver tablets, on which were written in large characters all his qualities.

The king and Calaf appeared after the mandarins, borne by twenty military officers in a litter of red sandal wood, also uncovered, on which the first letter of the monarch's name and several figures of animals were painted in silver characters. Two generals of the armies of Altoun-Khan each held by the side of the litter a large fan, to preserve them from the heat, and three thousand eunuchs who marched behind ended the procession.

When they had arrived at the place where the officers of the hunt awaited the king with falcons, a quail hunt was begun which lasted till sunset. Then the prince and the persons of his suite returned to the palace in the same order as they started. They found in a courtyard, under several pavilions of different coloured taffetas, a quantity of

little tables, highly varnished and covered with all sorts of meats. Calaf and the mandarins seated themselves, after the example of the king, each at a little separate table, near which was another which served as a buffet. They began by drinking several draughts of rice wine before touching the meats ; then they only ate without drinking.

The repast over, Altoun-Khan conducted the Prince of the Nogars into a great hall brilliantly lit, and full of chairs arranged as for a spectacle, and they were followed by all the mandarins. The king arranged the audience and made Calaf seat himself beside him on a great ebony throne ornamented with gold filigree.

As soon as everybody had taken his seat, singers and musicians entered, who began a very pleasant concert. Altoun-Khan was charmed with it. Very fond of Chinese music, he asked the son of Timurtasch from time to time what he thought of it, and the young prince, from complaisance, estimated it above all other music in the world.

The concert over, the singers and players retired to make room for an artificial elephant, which, advancing by means of a spring into the

middle of the hall, threw out six acrobats, who indulged in many perilous feats. They were almost naked ; they wore only sandals, breeches of Indian cloth, and caps of brocade. After they had shown their suppleness and agility by a thousand surprising tricks, they re-entered the elephant, which went out as it had entered. Then appeared comedians, who represented an impromptu piece, the subject of which was suggested to them by the king.

When all these amusements were over, the night being far advanced, Altoun-Khan and Calaf rose to retire to rest in their apartments and all the mandarins retired.

The young Prince of the Nogais, conducted by eunuchs who bore tapers in golden torches, was preparing to taste the sweets of sleep so far as the impatience to return to the divan permitted him, when, on entering his apartment, he found there a young lady clothed in a very full robe of red brocade with silver flowers, over another narrower one of white satin, all embroidered in gold and scattered with rubies and emeralds.

She wore on her head a cap of rose-coloured taffetas, trimmed with pearls and light silver embroidery, which only covered the top of the

head, and displayed very beautiful curly hair in which were some artificial flowers. As regards her figure and face, nothing more beautiful nor more perfect, after the Princess of China, could be seen.

The son of Timurtasch was somewhat surprised to see so charming a lady alone in his apartment in the middle of the night. He would not have looked upon her without admiration had he not seen Tourandot, but could a lover of that princess have eyes for another? As soon as the lady perceived Calaf, she rose from the sofa on which she was seated, and on which she had placed her veil, and, after having bowed rather low:

'Prince,' she said, 'I do not doubt but that you are very astonished to find a woman here, for you doubtless know that it is forbidden under pain of very rigorous punishment, to the men and women who inhabit this palace to have any communication with each other, but the importance of what I have to tell you has made me despise all dangers. I have been skilful and fortunate enough to remove all the obstacles which presented themselves to me. I have won over the eunuchs who serve you; finally, I got into your apartment. There

only remains for me to tell you what brings me and that is what you are going to hear.'

This preface interested Calaf; he did not doubt but that the lady, since she had taken so dangerous a step, had things to tell him worthy of his attention. He begged her to reseat herself on the sofa; they both sat down, then the lady continued thus :

' My lord, I think I had better begin by telling you that I am the daughter of a khan, tributary to Altoun-Khan. My father, several years ago, was bold enough to refuse to pay the ordinary tribute; and trusting a little too much to his experience in the art of war as well as to the valour of his soldiers, he put himself on the defensive in case of attack. The attack did not fail to come. The king of China, irritated at his audacity, sent against him the most skilful of his generals with a powerful army; my father, although less strong, went to meet him. After a bloody combat, which took place on the bank of a river, the Chinese general remained victorious. My father, pierced with a thousand wounds, died during the action; but dying, he ordered that his wives and children should be thrown into the river, to preserve them

from slavery. Those whom he entrusted with the carrying out of this generous but inhuman order, executed it. They threw me into the water with my mother, my sisters, and two brothers, who were kept with us on account of their youth. The Chinese general arrived at that moment at that part of the river where they had thrown us in, and where we were perishing miserably. This sad and horrible spectacle excited his compassion ; he promised a reward to those of his soldiers who should save some remnant of the family of the vanquished khan. Several Chinese horsemen, in spite of the rapidity of the river, immediately entered it and urged their horses in every direction in which they saw our expiring bodies floating. They rescued some of them, but their succour was only of avail to me. I was still breathing when they carried me ashore ; the remainder were lifeless. The general took great care of me, as though it were necessary to his glory, and my captivity had given fresh honour to his victory. He brought me to this town and presented me to the king, after having given him an account of his doings. Altoun-Khan placed me about the princess his daughter, who is two or three years younger

than I. Although I was little more than a child, I did not cease thinking that I was a slave, and that I ought to behave in accordance with my unfortunate position ; so I studied the temper of Tourandot. I set myself to please her, and I was so obliging and attentive that I gained her friendship. Since that time I share her confidence with a young person of illustrious birth, who has been reduced to slavery by the misfortunes attending her birth. Pardon me, my lord,' she continued, 'this story, which has nothing to do with the subject of my visit. I thought it my duty to acquaint you with the fact that I am of noble birth, to inspire you with more confidence in me, for the important story I have to tell you is such that, coming from a simple slave, it might find little credit in your mind. I do not know even whether, although a khan's daughter, I shall be able to persuade you ; will a prince, charmed with Tourandot, put faith in what I am going to tell him of her ? '

' Princess,' interrupted the son of Timurtasch at this moment, 'do not keep me longer in suspense. Tell me, I beg, what you have to say about the Princess of China.'

'My lord,' replied the lady, 'Tourandot, the barbarous Tourandot, has formed the design of having you assassinated.'

At these words, Calaf, throwing himself back on his sofa, remained in a state of horror and astonishment.

The slave-princess, who had anticipated the surprise of the young prince, said to him: 'I am not astonished that you have received this terrible news thus, and I see I was right in doubting your willingness to believe it.'

'Just Heaven!' cried Calaf, when he had recovered from his prostration, 'have I heard aright? Can the Princess of China be capable of so sinister an attempt? How can she have conceived it?'

'Prince,' said the lady to him, 'this is how she took this horrible resolution. This morning when she left the divan, where I was behind her throne, she was furious at what had passed; she returned to her apartment, agitated with the most violent rage and hate. She thought for a long time over the question you put to her, and not being able to reply as she wished, she gave way to despair. I and the other favourite slave have spared nothing to calm her violence. We even did all we could to

inspire in her feelings favourable to yourself; we praised your beauty and intelligence to her, and we represented to her that instead of grieving immoderately, she should rather resolve to give you her hand. But she silenced us with a torrent of insults against men, of whom the most amiable does not make more impression on her than the ugliest and most deformed. "They are all," she said, "contemptible objects, for whom I shall never have anything but aversion. As for the one who now presents himself, I hate him more than the others, and since I cannot free myself from him but by an assassination, I shall have him assassinated." I opposed this hideous design,' continued the slave; 'I represented to Tourandot its terrible consequences. I represented to her the wrong she would do herself, and the just horror that future centuries would have of her memory. On her side, the other slave did not fail to add her arguments to mine; but all our talking has been useless, we have not been able to turn her from her enterprise. She has charged some faithful eunuchs to take your life to-morrow morning when you leave your palace to go to the divan.'

'O inhuman princess, perfidious Tourandot!'

cried the Prince of the Nogars. 'Is it thus you prepare to reward the love of the unhappy son of Timurtasch? Calaf is so horrible to you then that you prefer to rid yourself of him by a crime which will dishonour you, rather than join your destiny to his. Great God! of what strange adventures is my life made up? Sometimes I seem about to enjoy enviable happiness and sometimes I am plunged in an abyss of woe.'

'My lord,' said the slave to him, 'if Heaven sends you misfortunes it does not, at least, wish you to succumb to them, since it warns you of the dangers which threaten you. Yes, prince, it is Heaven who has inspired me with the thought of saving you, for I not only come to reveal to you a plot against your life, I come to give you means of avoiding it. By the agency of some devoted cunuchs I have gained over some soldiers of the guard, who will facilitate for you the exit from the palace. As after your flight they will not fail to make inquiries and learn that I am the author of it, I have resolved to fly with you, to leave this fatal court where I have more than one source of annoyance; my slavery makes me hate it, and you make it more odious to me. There are,' she continued,

'in a place in the town horses awaiting us ; let us go and reach, if possible, the lands of the tribe of Berlas. I have blood-ties with the Prince Alinguier who is sovereign over them ; he will be extremely rejoiced to see his relation escaped from the haughty Altoun-Khan, and he will receive you as my liberator. We will both live beneath his tents more tranquilly and more happily than here ; I, freed from the bonds of my captivity, shall enjoy a gentler fate, and you, my lord, you may find there some princess beautiful enough to merit being loved, and who, far from attempting your life to escape being your wife, will only be careful of pleasing you if she can make happy such a prince as you. Let us lose no time, let us go, and may the sun on beginning its course to-morrow find us far from Pekin !'

Calaf replied : 'Beautiful princess, I have to thank you a thousand times for having wished to deliver me from the danger I am in. Would that I could out of gratitude take you from slavery and conduct you to the horde of the Khan of Berlas, your relation ! What pleasure I should have in placing you in his care ! Thereby I should acquit

myself of some obligations under which I am to him. But tell me, princess, ought I to disappear thus from the eyes of Altoun-Khan? What would he think of me? He would think I had only come to his court to carry you off, and whilst I was only flying to save his daughter from crime, he would accuse me of having violated the laws of hospitality. Moreover, I must confess to you, barbarous as is the Princess of China, my heart will not let me hate her. What am I saying? Hate her? I adore her; I am devoted to her every whim, and since she wishes to sacrifice me, the victim is quite ready.'

The slave seeing the Prince of the Nogais resolved to die rather than fly with her, began to cry, saying to him: 'Is it possible, my lord, that you prefer death to the gratitude of a captive princess whose chains you can break? If Tourandot is more beautiful than I, on the other hand I have a better heart than hers. Alas! when you presented yourself this morning at the divan, I trembled for you. I feared you would not answer the questions of the daughter of Altoun-Khan, and when you replied well to them I felt a fresh trouble arise in me; I felt that without doubt your life

would be attempted. Ah! my dear prince,' she added, 'I conjure you to reflect and not let yourself be carried away by the passion which makes you face death without flinching. Let not a blind love make you despise a danger which alarms me; yield to the fear which I feel for you, and let us both, without delay, leave this place where I suffer cruel torments.'

'Fair princess,' replied the son of Timurtasch at these words, 'whatever misfortune may befall me, I cannot make up my mind to so sudden a flight. You have, I admit, the means of rewarding your liberator and giving him a future full of charm. But I am not born to be happy; my fate is to love Tourandot, in spite of the horror in which she holds me; far from her, I should drag out languishing days.'

'Well, ungrateful man, remain!' abruptly interrupted the lady, rising. 'Do not leave this place which has such delights for you, even if you must water it with your blood. I do not urge you to leave any longer; flight with a slave does not please you. Whatever ardour the Princess of China inspires in you, you have less love for her than aversion for me.'

Thus saying, she put on her veil again and left Calaf's apartment.

The young prince, after the departure of the lady, remained on the sofa in great perplexity. 'Can I believe,' he said, 'what I have just heard? Can barbarity be carried to this extent? But, alas! I cannot doubt it: this slave-princess was horrified at the step meditated by Tourandot. She came to warn me of it, and the sentiments alone that she gave expression to are sure guarantees of her sincerity. Ah! cruel daughter of the best of kings, is it thus you abuse the gifts you have received from Heaven? O Heaven! how could you have endowed this inhuman princess with such perfect beauty, or why have you given her so barbarous a soul combined with so much charm?'

Instead of seeking to procure some hours' sleep, he passed the rest of the night absorbed in the most afflicting reflections. At last the day appeared, the sound of bells and drums was heard, and soon six mandarins came, as on the preceding day, to conduct him to the council. He crossed the courtyard where the soldiers of the king's guard were drawn up in rows. He feared to lose his

life here, thinking that, doubtless, the people chosen to assassinate him awaited him on his way. Far from being on his guard and thinking of defending himself, he walked like a man resolved to die, and even seemed to accuse his assassins of slowness. However, he passed through the courtyard without anyone attacking him, and he arrived in the first hall of the divan. ‘Ah! it is doubtless here,’ he said to himself, ‘that the sanguinary order of the princess is to be carried out.’ At the same time he looked all round, and everyone he saw seemed to him his murderer. He advanced, nevertheless, and entered the council chamber without receiving the mortal blow he expected. All the doctors and mandarins were already under their pavilions, and Altoun-Khan was about to appear. ‘What is the princess’s design?’ he then said to himself. ‘Does she wish to be the witness of my death, and does she wish to have me assassinated before the eyes of her father? Can the king be an accomplice in this? What am I to think? Can her feelings have changed. Can she have revoked my death warrant?’

Whilst in this state of uncertainty, the door

of the inner palace opened and the king, accompanied by Tourandot, entered the hall. They placed themselves on their thrones. The Prince of the Nogars stood before them, and at the same distance as on the preceding day.

The chancellor, as soon as he saw the king seated, rose and asked the young prince whether he remembered having promised to renounce the princess if she replied correctly to the question which he had put to her. Calaf replied in the affirmative, and protested anew that on that condition he would cease to pretend to the honour of being the king's son-in-law.

The chancellor then addressed Tourandot : 'And you, great princess,' he said, 'you know the oath that binds you, and to which you have subjected yourself, if you do not to-day name the prince whose name has been asked of you.'

The king, persuaded that she could not reply to the question of Calaf, said to her : 'My daughter, you have had ample time to reflect upon what has been proposed to you: but were a year given to you to think over it, I am of opinion

that, in spite of your penetration, you would be obliged to admit at the end that it is beyond your powers. So, since you cannot guess it, yield with a good grace to the love of this young prince, and satisfy the wish I have to see him as your husband. He is worthy to be it, and to reign with you after me over the peoples of China.'

'My lord,' said Tourandot, 'why do you suppose I cannot reply to this prince's question? That is not as difficult as you think. If yesterday I suffered the ignominy of being beaten, to-day I aspire to the honour of victory. I am going to defeat this intrepid young man who has had too bad an opinion of my intelligence. Let him put his question to me, and I will answer it.'

'Madam,' then said the Prince of the Nogais, 'I ask you the name of the prince who, after having suffered endless fatigue, and begged his bread, is at this moment overwhelmed with joy and glory?'

'That prince,' replied Tourandot, 'is named Calaf, and he is the son of Timurtasch.'

As soon as Calaf heard his name spoken, he changed colour, his sight became obscured

and he suddenly fell senseless. The king and the whole assembly, judging by this that Tourandot had really named the prince whose name had been asked her, grew pale and remained in great consternation.

After Prince Calaf had recovered from his swoon, through the attentions of the mandarins and of the king himself, who had descended from his throne to succour him, he addressed Tourandot: 'Beautiful princess,' he said to her, 'you are wrong if you think you have replied well to my question. The son of Timurtasch is not at all overwhelmed with joy and glory, he is rather covered with shame and overwhelmed with grief.'

'I admit,' said the princess, 'that you are not filled with joy and glory at this moment, but you were when you put your question to me. So, prince, instead of having recourse to vain subtleties, admit that you have lost the rights which you had over Tourandot. I can, therefore, refuse you my hand, and abandon you to regret at having lost it. However, I wish you to know, and I declare it publicly here, that I am otherwise disposed towards you. The friendship which the king my father

has conceived for you, and your particular merits, determine me to take you as my husband.'

At this speech the hall of the divan resounded with joy. The mandarins and doctors applauded the words of the princess. The king approached her, embraced her, and said : ' My daughter, you could not take a resolution which would be more agreeable to me ; thereby you will efface the bad impression which you have made on the mind of my people, and you will give to a father the satisfaction which he has long expected from you and which he despaired of ever receiving. Yes, the aversion you had for men, this aversion so contrary to nature, made me lose the sweet hope of seeing princes of my blood born to you. Happily this hatred ends to-day, and what crowns my wishes is that you have extinguished it in favour of a young hero who is dear to me. But tell us,' he added, ' how you have been able to guess the name of a prince who was unknown to you ? By what charm have you discovered it ? '

' My lord,' replied Tourandot, ' it is not by enchantment that I have known it, it is by natural means ; one of my slaves went last night to find Prince Calaf, and was ingenious enough to draw

his secret from him ; he ought to pardon me for having availed myself of this treachery, since I do not put it to bad use.'

'Ah, charming Tourandot,' cried the Prince of the Nogars at that moment, 'is it possible that your sentiments are so favourable to me ? From what a frightful abyss have you rescued me, to put me in the foremost place in the world. Alas ! how unjust I was. Whilst you were preparing for me so beautiful a fate, I thought you capable of the blackest perfidy. Deceived by a horrible fable which disturbed my reason, I repaid your goodness with injurious suspicions. I am impatient to expiate my injustice at your feet.'

The amorous son of Timurtasch was continuing to indulge in tender and passionate speeches, when all of a sudden he was obliged to be silent to listen to, and observe a slave who had stood till then behind the Princess of China, and who, advancing now into the midst of the audience, surprised every one by her proceedings. She lifted her veil, and Calaf immediately recognised her as the same person whom he had seen in the night in his apartment ; her face was as pale as death, her eyes wandered, and she seemed to be meditating some

terrible deed. All the spectators looked at her with astonishment, and Altoun-Khan, like the others, was in a state of expectancy as to what she was going to say, when, turning to Tourandot, she spoke to her thus :

'Princess, it is time to disabuse you ; I did not go to seek the Prince Calaf to get him to reveal his name to me, I did not take this step to serve you ; it was in my own interest that I risked it, I wished to free myself from slavery, and take your lover from you. I had arranged everything to fly with him ; he rejected my proposal, or rather the ungrateful man despised my affection. I have nevertheless spared nothing to detach him from you. I painted your pride to him in the blackest colours, I even said you were going to have him assassinated to-day, but I charged you in vain with this intended crime. I have not been able to shake his constancy. He knows how I gave way on leaving him, and his eyes have been the witness of my rage and confusion. Jealous and desperate I returned to your apartment, and by a false confidence I earned your approbation by a step which has only led to my shame. It was not in order to relieve your embarrassment that I told you the

name you wished to know ; it escaped the prince in an outburst he could not restrain, and I thought that, still inimical to men, you would be very glad to be able to dismiss Calaf. In fact, I thought thereby to prevent the tying of the knots which are going to bind you together. But since my artifice has proved futile, and you are determined to marry your lover, I have no other alternative but to do this.' Saying these words, she drew from beneath her dress a dagger, and plunged it in her breast.

The whole assembly shuddered at this action. Altoun-Khan was seized with horror at it ; Calaf felt his joy diminish, and Tourandot, uttering a loud cry, descended from her throne to go to the assistance of her slave and save her if possible from perishing.

The other favourite slave also ran forward with the same intention, as well as the two others who held the ink and paper ; but before they reached her, the unhappy woman enamoured of the son of Timurtasch, as though the blow she had given herself had not been sufficient to take her life, withdrew her dagger and stabbed herself again. All that they could do was to receive in their arms her tottering body.

'Adelmuc,' said the distressed Princess of China, 'my dear Adelmuc, what have you done? Why have you gone to this extremity? Why did you not open your heart to me last night? Why did you not say you would take your life if I married Prince Calaf? What efforts would I not have made for a rival such as you?'

At these words the princess's slave, opening her eyes already closing in death, turned them towards Tourandot and said to her: 'It is all over, my princess, I am about to cease to live and suffer; do not pity my fate, rather praise my generous resolution. In dying, I free myself from a double slavery; I escape from the chains of Altoun-Khan, and from those of love which are much more rigorous. I imbibed with my mother's milk the principles of fortitude, so it need not excite surprise that I have been capable of this determination.' Saying these words, she sighed a deep sigh and died.

The mandarins and doctors were touched at the pitiable end of Adelmuc: Tourandot broke out afresh in tears, and Calaf, looking upon himself as the author of this tragic event, was deeply grieved at it. The good King of China in his turn seemed greatly affected.

'Ah, unfortunate princess,' he said, 'only and precious relic of a celebrated family, what does it avail you now to have been saved from the fury of the waters? Alas! you would have been happier had you achieved your destiny the day that saw that unhappy monarch, your father, and all your family perish. May you at least, after having passed through the nine hells, be born again, the daughter of another sovereign, at the first transmigration.'

Altoun-Khan did not content himself with deplored thus the misfortune of the Princess Adelmuc. He ordered a superb funeral. Her body was borne into a separate palace, where it was clothed with rich white garments, and before placing it in a coffin, the king, with all the officers of his household, went to make reverence and offer perfumes to it: then it was enclosed in a coffin of aloe wood, and it was placed on a sort of throne which had been raised for this purpose in the middle of a great courtyard. It remained there a whole week, and every day the wives of the mandarins, in mourning from head to foot, were obliged to go and visit it and make before it four reverences, each with demonstrations of grief.

After this ceremony, the day which the king had designated for the burial having come, the coffin was placed on a triumphal car, covered with silver plates mingled with figures of animals painted on cardboard ; then a sacrifice was made to the genius who guarded the car, so that the funeral might be happily concluded, and after having watered the coffin with scented water, the procession began. It lasted three days, on account of the various ceremonies and the pauses it was necessary to make before arriving at the mountain where the tombs of the Kings of China are ; for Altoun-Khan wished that the ashes of the Princess Adelmuc should be mingled with those of the princes of his house. It is true that Tourandot, out of friendship for her favourite slave, had begged the king to do her this honour. When the procession was near the mountain the coffin was removed from the car which had borne it thus far, to be placed on another still richer. Then a bull was sacrificed which was sprinkled with aromatic wine, and the coffin was given to the Earth, that was entreated to receive the body of the princess favourably.

When the obsequies of Adelmuc were over, the aspect of the court of China changed : mourning was put aside and pleasure succeeded the grief which had occupied it. Altoun-Khan ordered preparations to be made for the marriage of Calaf with Tourandot, and whilst they were engaged on them, he sent ambassadors to the tribe of Berlas to inform the Khan of the Nogais of all that had passed in China, and to beg him to come thither with the princess his wife.

The preparations being completed, the marriage took place with all the pomp and magnificence due to the quality of the bridal pair. No mandarins were given to Calaf for masters, as is customary in China. Moreover, the king declared publicly that, to mark the particular esteem and consideration he had for his son-in-law, he dispensed him from making the ordinary four daily reverences to his wife that are enjoined upon the husband of the daughter of a king of that land until she has given him children. For a whole month there were nothing but spectacles and feasts at the court, and there were also great rejoicings in the town.

The possession of Tourandot did not at all

abate the love of Calaf ; and this princess, who had till then looked upon men with so much contempt, could not help loving so perfect a prince. Some time after their marriage the ambassadors whom Altoun-Khan had sent to the country of Berlas returned with a goodly company ; they had with them not only the father and mother of their king's son-in-law, but even prince Alinguier, who, to do greater honour to Elmaze and Timurtasch, had wished to accompany them with the greatest lords of his court, and conduct them as far as Pekin.

The young prince of the Nogais, informed of their arrival, hastened to meet them. He met them at the door of the palace. The joy he had in seeing his father and mother again, and the delight they experienced at sight of him, must be imagined, for it is impossible to express it in words.

They embraced each other again and again, and the tears they shed moved the Chinese and Tartars who were present to do likewise.

After such sweet embraces, Calaf saluted the Khan of Berlas : he assured him how deeply he was touched at his kindness, and especially at his having wished to accompany the authors of his being as far as the court of China ; to whieh

Prince Alinguer replied that, being ignorant of the quality of Timurtasch and Elmaze, he had not paid them all the regard due to them, and so, in order to make reparation for the ill-treatment he might have shown them, he had thought it his duty to take this step.

Thereupon the Khan of the Nogaïs and the Princess his wife complimented the sovereign of Berlas ; then they all entered the palace to go and see Altoun-Khan. They found this monarch, who awaited them in the first hall. He embraced them all one after the other, and received them very agreeably ; he then conducted them into his cabinet, where, after having expressed to Timurtasch the pleasure he had in seeing him and his sympathy in his misfortunes, he assured him he would do all he could to avenge him upon the Sultan of Carizma ; and it was no vain assurance, for that very day orders were sent to the governors of the province to put on the road without delay the soldiers who were in the towns of their jurisdictions, and to make them take the route to that place which had been chosen as the rendezvous of the formidable army which was to be assembled. On his side, the Khan of Berlas, who had foreseen this war, and who

hoped to contribute to the re-establishment of Timurtasch in his states, had ordered the commander-in-chief of his troops to hold himself in readiness to commence a campaign of the first order. He commanded him to join the Chinese army as soon as possible.

Whilst the officers and soldiers who were to compose the army of Altoun-Khan, and who were dispersed in the towns of the kingdom, were on the march to assemble all together in the same place, the king spared nothing to receive his new guests well. He gave to each a separate palace with a large number of eunuchs, and a guard of two thousand men. Every day he had some fresh feast for their amusement, and gave all his attention to seeking what could give them pleasure.

Calaf, although occupied with many things, did not forget his old hostess ; he remembered with pleasure the part she had played in his destiny ; he sent for her to the palace and begged Tourandot to receive her among the persons of her suite.

The hope which Timurtasch and the Princess Elmaze entertained of remounting the throne of the Nogais Tartars, with the help of the King of China, made them insensibly forget their past mis-

fortunes, and the beautiful prince to whom Tourandot gave birth in due time overwhelmed them with joy. The birth of this child, who was named Prince of China, was celebrated in all the towns of this vast empire with public rejoicings.

They were still going on when the couriers sent by the officers who had orders to assemble the army announced that all the troops of the kingdom and even those of the Khan of Berlas had arrived at the tryst. Timurtasch, Calaf, and Alinguer immediately departed for the camp, where they found everything in readiness and seven hundred thousand men ready to march. They soon took the road to the enemy's country, and finally they entered the territory of the Sultan of Carizma.

This prince, warned of their advance and their numbers by couriers sent him by the governors of his frontier, instead of being discouraged, prepared courageously to receive so large an enemy ; instead even of intrenching himself he had the audacity to march towards them at the head of four hundred thousand men whom he had hastily got together. They met near Khokand and gave battle. On the side of the Chinese, Timurtasch

commanded the right wing, Prince Alinguer the left, and Calaf was in the centre ; on the other side the sultan entrusted the command of his right wing to the most skilful of his generals, opposed the Prince of Carizma to the Prince of the Nogaïs, and reserved to himself the left wing, in which was the flower of his cavalry.

The Khan of Berlas began the combat with the soldiers of his tribe, who, fighting like men who had the eyes of their leader upon them, soon made the right wing of the enemy give way, but the officer commanding it brought it into order again.

It was not thus with Timurtasch. The sultan broke his force through at the first onslaught, and the Chinese in disorder were ready to take flight, without the Khan of the Nogais being able to restrain them, when Calaf, informed of what was passing, left the care of the centre to an old Chinese general, and ran to the assistance of his father with some selected troops. In a short while the aspect of affairs changed ; the left wing of the Carizmians was broken through in its turn ; the ranks opened and were then easily broken ; the whole wing was put to rout.

The sultan, who wished to conquer or die, made incredible efforts to rally his soldiers, but Timurtasch and Calaf did not give him time, and surrounded him on all sides, so that the Prince Alinguer, having also defeated the right wing, the victory declared itself for the Chinese.

There remained for the Sultan of Carizma only one course to pursue, and that was to make a passage through his enemies and to take refuge with some foreign prince ; but this Prince, preferring not to survive his descat, rather than offer to the nations the spectacle of his head despoiled of all its diadems, threw himself blindly where he saw great carnage going on, and he did not cease fighting until, piercled with a thousand mortal wounds, he fell lifeless amongst the crowd of dead.

The Prince of Carizma, his son, met the same fate ; two hundred thousand of their men were killed or made prisoners, the rest sought safety in flight. The Chinese also lost many men ; but if the battle had been sanguinary it was decisive. Timurtasch, after having given thanks to Heaven for this happy success, sent an officer to Pekin to

give details of it to the King of China ; then he advanced into the sultan's country and took possession of the town of Carizma.

He had it published in this capital that he wished to confiscate neither the riches nor the liberty of the Carizmians ; that God having made him master of the throne of his enemy, he proposed preserving it ; that henceforth all the countries which had been under the obedience of the sultan would recognise as their sovereign Prince Calaf his son.

The Carizmians, tired of the sway of their master, and persuaded that that of Calaf would be milder, submitted with a good grace, and proclaimed as sultan the young prince, whose merits they knew.

Whilst the new Sultan of Carizma was taking all necessary measures to confirm his power, Timurtasch set out with a part of the Chinese troops, and returned with all possible speed to his territories. The Nogais Tartars received him like faithful subjects, charmed to see their legitimate sovereign again ; but he did not content himself with remounting his throne : he declared war against the Circassians to revenge himself for the treachery

they had shown to Prince Calaf. Instead of seeking to appease him by submission, these people formed in haste an army to resist him ; he fought them, cut them almost to pieces, and had himself declared King of Circassia. After that, having returned to Carizma, he found there the princesses Elmaze and Tourandot, whom Altoun-Khan had had escorted to Carizma, with a large following.

Here ended the misfortunes of Prince Calaf, who attracted to himself the love and esteem of the Carizmians by his virtues. He reigned long and peaceably over them, and was always charmed with Tourandot. He had a second son by her, who was Sultan of Carizma after him ; for Altoun-Khan had the Prince of China brought up and chose him as his successor.

Timurtasch and the princess his wife went to pass the rest of their days at Astrakan ; and the Khan of Berlas, after having received from them and their son all the marks of gratitude that his generosity merited, retired to his tribe with the rest of his troops.

The nurse of the Princess of Cashmere having

finished relating the story of Calaf, asked the women of Farrukhnaz what they thought of it. They all said it was very interesting, and that Calaf seemed to them a virtuous prince and a perfect lover.

'For myself,' said the princess, 'I think him more vain than loving, a little thoughtless—in a word, what is called a young man.'

'Well, my princess,' said the nurse, 'since Calaf does not yet satisfy your taste, I will, with your permission, relate to you the story of a King of Damascus and his vizir; perhaps it will please you better.'

'Very willingly,' replied Farrukhnaz. 'My women love your stories too much for me not to give them the pleasure of hearing you. It is true you know how to paint agreeable portraits, but Sutlumemé,' she added, 'my dear Sutlumemé, it is in vain you paint men with the loveliest colours; their defects always appear through your painting.'

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.



